



Parent and Student Handbook

School Year 2016-2017



R. Rodriguez, Executive Director
Bericka Broomfield, Chair, Board of Directors

1240 Randolph Street NE Washington, DC 20017
202/723-1467 www.shiningstarspcs.org

Contents

MISSION

[OUR MISSION](#)

[OUR BELIEFS](#)

[OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES](#)

[OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY](#)

[CREATING A CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE MONTESSORI SCHOOL AND CLASSROOMS](#)

SCHOOL INFORMATION

[LOCATION](#)

[MAILING ADDRESS](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[WEBSITE](#)

[SCHOOL HOURS](#)

[BEFORE SCHOOL HOURS](#)

[EXTENDED LEARNING AND AFTERCARE PROGRAM SERVICES](#)

[SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYS](#)

[SECURITY AND ACCESS TO THE BUILDING](#)

[PARKING](#)

[PICK – UP & DROP- OFF](#)

[GUIDE & STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION 2015-2016](#)

ADMISSIONS and ENROLLMENT

[APPLICATION](#)

[ENROLLMENT POLICIES](#)

[FAMILY GUIDE “MEET AND GREET”](#)

[LOTTERY](#)

[NEW AND RETURNING STUDENT ORIENTATION TO SCHOOL \(AUGUST\)](#)

[MONTESSORI ‘INTENSIVE’ FOR NEW STUDENTS K-5TH GRADE](#)

SCHOOL POLICIES

[ATTENDANCE](#)

[ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL](#)

[WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN BRING TO SCHOOL](#)

[BATHROOM INDEPENDENCE](#)
[BREAKFAST/ SNACK AND LUNCH](#)
[CELEBRATIONS AND BIRTHDAYS](#)
[CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS](#)
[CODE OF CONDUCT](#)
[COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD'S GUIDE](#)
[DRESS CODE](#)
[FAMILY EVENTS](#)
[FIELD TRIPS: A MONTESSORI 'SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS' – THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AS OUR CAMPUS](#)
[FUNDRAISING](#)
[LOST AND FOUND](#)
[NAP AND REST TIME](#)
[NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY](#)
[ONE CALL NOW](#)
[PARENT PARTICIPATION](#)
[PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES](#)
[PARENTS VOLUNTEERISM](#)
[PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION \(PTO\)](#)
[PEACE AND COMMUNITY GATHERING ASSEMBLY \(LAST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH\)](#)
[RECESS](#)
[SCHOOL CONTACTS](#)
[STUDENT FOLDERS AND/OR 'THE BLACK BAG'](#)
[VISITORS](#)
[WORK-AT-HOME](#)
[OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES](#)
[Emergency contingency plan](#)
[THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM: PRIMARY & ELEMENTARY](#)
[THE ARTS AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL](#)
[ASSESSMENTS AND TESTING](#)
[MONTESSORI ACADEMY \(SATURDAY\)](#)
[RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION \(RTI\)](#)

[The Student Support Team \(SST\)](#)

[WRITING PROGRAM](#)

[BEHAVIOR and DISCIPLINE](#)

[THE MONTESSORI METHOD AND DISCIPLINE](#)

[BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS](#)

[GRACE AND COURTESY](#)

[SUSPENSION & EXPULSION](#)

[STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS](#)

[GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES](#)

[HEALTH and SAFETY](#)

[STUDENT HEALTH & WELLNESS](#)

[ILLNESS OR INJURY AT SCHOOL](#)

[ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE and GOVERNANCE](#)

[WHAT IS A DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL?](#)

[ACCOUNTABILITY](#)

[LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION](#)

[GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT-RESOLUTION POLICY](#)

[ATTACHMENTS](#)

[SCHOOL SUPPLIES 15-16](#)

[SUGGESTIONS FOR DELICIOUS AND HEALTHY LUNCHES](#)

[CODE OF CONDUCT & PARENT CONTRACT](#)

[STUDENT PROGRESS RUBRIC](#)

August 2016

"Inspiring a Passion for Learning"

Welcome to Shining Stars Montessori Academy Public Charter School. We are proud to offer an environment where learning is joyful.

Our mission at Shining Stars Montessori Academy PCS is to provide carefully planned, stimulating environment of the highest quality, helping children develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and lifelong learning. Our approach to education is based on the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, one of the world's most respected educators. Her philosophy, often referred to as 'education for life', has been embraced in both public and private schools around the globe.

Research and experts from around the world continually demonstrate that a Montessori education provides the very best way for children to learn. Whether you are new to Montessori or not, we are so happy that you are have chosen to be a member of our school family for SY 2016-2017. A full school year ahead of us holds so much opportunity. What do we want to celebrate at the end of this school year? What are the hopes and dreams of our students? What do the Guides/Teachers, staff and parents hope for? What do we hope to say as we reflect on the year?

In 2016-17, we will be expanding enrollment to 200 students from prekindergarten to the fifth grade. As part of that expansion, we are adding a sixth Primary and second Lower Elementary class. The goal with our 2016-2017 move to a new Randolph Street, NE home will be to eventually expand our enrollment ceiling to 350 students in grades prekindergarten (3) through sixth grade.

Finally, in order to know that you have received this 2016-2017 Handbook, you will need to sign the Acknowledgement Form, the SSMA Code of Conduct & Parent Contract and submit to the Front Office. If you have any questions regarding any section of the Handbook, please feel free to contact me or call the office at 202-723-1467.

Looking forward to a wonderful year (Mirando a hacia adelante a uno ano mariavilloso),

Go Stars !

Regina Rodriguez
Executive Director & Head of School

MISSION

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to offer a quality Montessori education infused with culturally inclusive principles to guide children to develop to their fullest potential.

OUR BELIEFS

- Every child can benefit from a Montessori education.
- Cultural empowerment is an essential part of meeting the emotional needs of children
- Children are naturally curious and creative.
- Children learn in different ways and at different paces.
- Children must be treated with respect.
- Children learn best through hands-on experiences, real-world application and problem-solving.
- Children need to be allowed to develop a high degree of functional independence and autonomy.
- Movement is essential to learning.
- The child benefits most when schools and families work together.
- School should be a joyful experience and foster the child's love of learning.
- Children are the hope for mankind.
- Montessori is an education for life.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We will work to stimulate the growth of the whole child by following the natural developmental cycles of human beings.
- We will encourage the child to follow his/her own individual interests as he learns at his/her own pace.
- We will provide multi-age classrooms to facilitate and encourage individualized learning.
- Shining Stars will be a place that provides an uninterrupted work cycle in which learning can occur.
- We will encourage collaboration between the teacher and the child.
- We will organize the child's activities and learning according to their social development.
- We will encourage the child to be motivated and rewarded by his/her own individual achievement.
- We will promote the child's ability to find out and do things for him/herself through manipulation of the materials (auto-education), leading to his/her functional independence.
- We will encourage the development of positive self-image through specialized culture-based learning activities and materials.
- We will promote and encourage parental development and involvement.
- We will provide a loving, secure, and ordered place for every child.
- We will provide adequately trained and responsive staff.
- We will promote and encourage self-discipline and conflict resolution strategies.
- We will provide the opportunities for and encourage, purposeful movement, leading to the refining of fine and gross motor skills.

OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Our educational focus is derived from the Montessori Method of instruction. Montessori education has been in practice for 100 years and is characterized by multi-age classrooms, special materials used for instruction; work periods that span long time blocks, student choice of work, individual and small group instruction, and collaborative work.

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

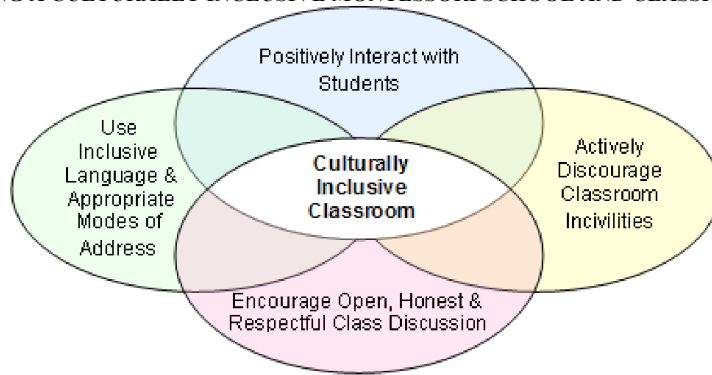


Montessori education is the education of the *whole* child. Maria Montessori believed that education begins at birth and continues through four subsequent stages of development from childhood to adulthood. Each stage of development is distinct in terms of characteristics and needs. From birth, the human being is in the process of adaptation to his/her surroundings and is engaged in a unique self-construction of personality. The first two planes of development are encompassed in childhood (birth to 12), during which the child undergoes this process of self-construction through work. The work of the child is done in a scientifically designed and carefully prepared environment. The guide's (teacher's) role in the environment (classroom) linking the child to the materials in the environment. All of the materials used by the child are specifically designed to facilitate this process of self-construction. The teacher will observe the child's work and make any necessary interventions or adjustments to ensure the child's continuous development and active education.

Over the last 100 years, The Montessori approach to education has been quietly revolutionizing children's learning. Started by Maria Montessori, in 1907 in Rome, the Montessori Method has since then educated children the world over. Dr. Montessori had a vision that world peace and an eradication of war should be the ultimate aim of human endeavors and she believed wholeheartedly that every child could be an agent of change for peace in the world. She believed that all living things had a role to play, a "cosmic task", so to speak, and that by nurturing the spirits and intellects of children, we could unlock this potential hidden deep within them, and thereby positively affecting our collective future. Many of her discoveries are being confirmed today by research being done on brain development. According to Dr. Steven Hughes, a pediatric neuropsychologist and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Neurology at the University of Minnesota Medical School, "*Montessori education is a brain-based, developmental method that allows children to make creative choices in discovering people, places and knowledge of the world. It is hands-on learning, self-expression, and collaborative play in a beautifully crafted environment of respect, peace and joy...and it is...the best brain-based model of education.*"¹

¹ See: AMI/USA News: Parenting for a New World, January 2009, Vol. XVIII, No. 1
Parent Handbook 2016-2017

CREATING A CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE MONTESSORI SCHOOL AND CLASSROOMS



A culturally inclusive Montessori school across all classrooms is one where Shining Stars Montessori Academy students, staff and the parent community recognize, appreciate and *capitalize on diversity* so as to enrich the overall learning experience. Fostering a culturally inclusive learning environment encourages all individuals – regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation or political beliefs – to develop personal contacts and effective intercultural skills. Cognitive development, perspective-taking, critical thinking skills, academic achievement, and problem-solving skills are among the outcomes that researchers have consistently noted in studies about the effects of inclusive pedagogy and curricula. Accordingly, engaging in meaningful, discussions about racial/ethnic, gender, religious, and socioeconomic differences, as well as privilege in all its forms, affords students opportunities to think critically about topics to which they previously had not been exposed. When faculty interweave multicultural perspectives into classroom discourse, students can challenge preconceived notions and learn about the unique knowledge that their peers of diverse backgrounds hold and bring to the classroom.

Shining Stars seeks to transform education for children ages 3-12 in the District of Columbia utilizing the Montessori approach to education that highlights cultural empowerment principles as the foundation for improving academic outcomes for students. We hope that the empowering educational experience at Shining Stars Montessori Academy will instill in our students a strong sense of personal identity, independence, respect for self and others, confidence, and an understanding of social justice and responsibility.

Creating a “culturally inclusive classroom” means that Shining Stars staff will be *intentional* about our environmental design, educational practices, and behavior modeling to ensure a true cultural competency within the community. Materials will be familiar to students, while also expanding their exposure to cultures around the world. Books on the shelves of the in-class libraries will reflect the ethnicities and races of our families, while presenting children from a variety of backgrounds as heroes and heroines of their own stories.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

LOCATION

1240 Randolph St., NE
Washington, DC 20017

MAILING ADDRESS

Shining Stars Montessori Academy Public Charter School
1240 Randolph St., NE
Washington, DC 20011

CONTACT

Phone: (202)723-1467
Fax: (202) 723-0097

WEBSITE

www.shiningstarspcs.org

SCHOOL HOURS

The School Day begins at 8:30 am and ends at 3:30 pm for Primary students. Elementary students in 1st and 2nd grades are dismissed at 3:30 pm. Elementary students in grades 3rd-5th are dismissed on Mondays and Fridays at 3:30pm, and 4:30 pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Please arrive promptly so as to ensure a smooth transition into the classroom environment for your child.

Primary Students (1/2 day – Pre K 3 only): 8:30am – 1:30pm²
Primary Student (ages 3 – 6): 8:30am – 3:30pm
Elementary Students (grades 1 & 2): 8:30am – 3:30pm (Monday and Friday)
Elementary Students (grades 3-5): 8:30am - 4:30pm (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday)

BEFORE SCHOOL HOURS

Before care is provided by Springboard and open to all enrolled students. You may not utilize before care on your child's first day of school. The cost is \$6.75 per day or \$33.75 per week. Parents must register and pay Springboard directly. <http://www.springboardkids.com>. Go to "enroll now" for parent account login

Before School Hours: 7:00am – 8:15am

EXTENDED LEARNING AND AFTERCARE PROGRAM SERVICES

Aftercare is provided on-site Monday-Friday and available to all students who are registered. Fees must be paid directly to the service provider. The Extended Learning Programs are provided onsite on advertised days (some last an hour, others end at 6pm) and may be combined with Aftercare to support your family's schedule. Registration is available on a first-come, first-served basis and will be advertised so each family has an equal opportunity to apply for a spot. Some Extended-Learning programs are fee-based, others are free. Details for each program can be found in the attachment section. Qualifying

² Parent choosing this options must 1) have designated this on their enrollment application. For those who did not and wish to do so through the course of the school year, you must 1) notify the Guide a week before initiating a changing the child/student's schedule, and 2) notify the school's Registrar following your notification of the Guide.

families may be eligible for scholarships, a reduced fee or no fee. We reserve the right to hold a lottery at our discretion if the number of interested students exceeds the number of open seats. Some activities may have attendance restrictions whereafter a certain number of absences your child's spot will be forfeited. This information will be provided during advertisement and the registration process.

After School Hours: 3:30pm – 6:00pm (Monday through Friday)
Extended Learning Program Hours: Varies

SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYS

Shining Stars will follow DCPS for school closings and delays, and also reserves the right to implement a closing, delay or early dismissal at our discretion. Please check major local TV and radio stations, as well as your email for information. Parents will be alerted about closings, delays and early dismissals via the school's One Call Now system. The system is used to transmit emergency information to all school community members via email and cell phone. Please make sure that the school **has your correct phone numbers and email address at all times.**

ACCESS TO THE BUILDING

During school hours, visitors and guests must ring the doorbell and wait to be admitted. You will be asked to sign in and out during the visit to the school.

PARKING

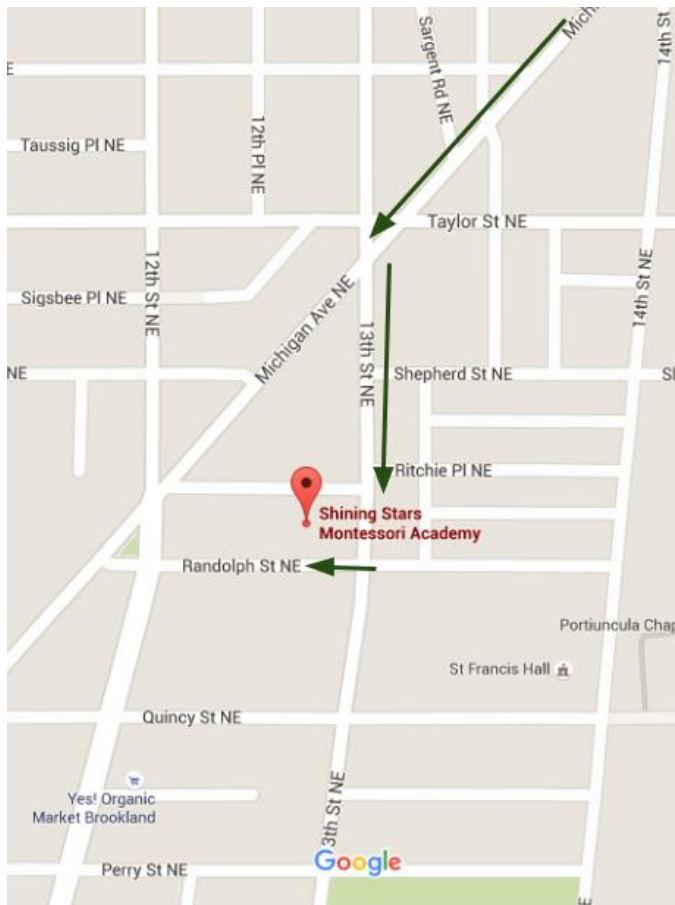
There is on-street parking for visitors, parents and staff on Randolph Street and 13th St NW. Please park **in front** of the school (school side) and not on the residential side.

PICK – UP & DROP- OFF

Please use 13th St NE to turn onto Randolph. 13th St. can accessed via Michigan Ave or any street above Quincy. When driving to school, please do not turn onto Randolph from 12th St. When you arrive to drop-off your child staff person will be there to escort the child into the building **from 8:00 am until 8:30 am**. After you drop off, please continue West on Randolph and exit via 12th St. There is no place to make a u-turn.

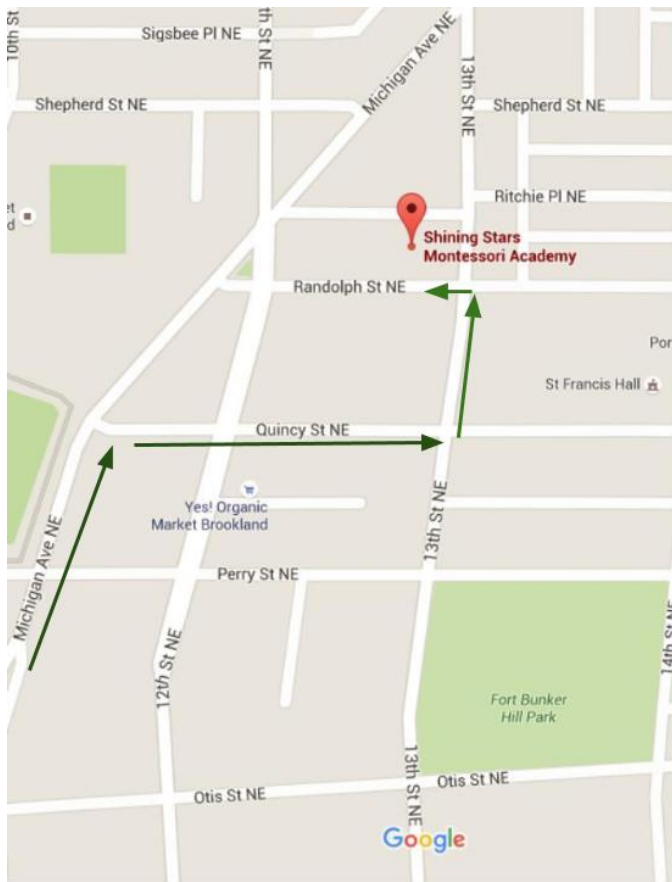
Please do not turn onto to Randolph from 12th St and make a u-turn or drop off on the opposite of the school.

Directions and Diagrams are on the following pages.



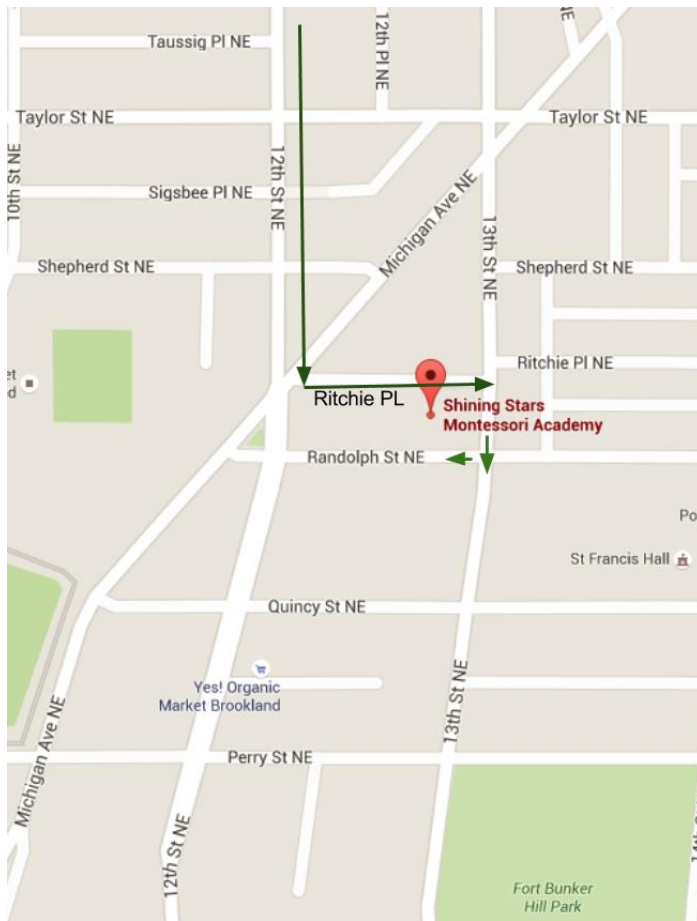
Travelling South on Michigan Ave

1. Turn left on 13th St.
2. Turn right on Randolph St.
3. Drop-off in front of the school (Kiss & Go)



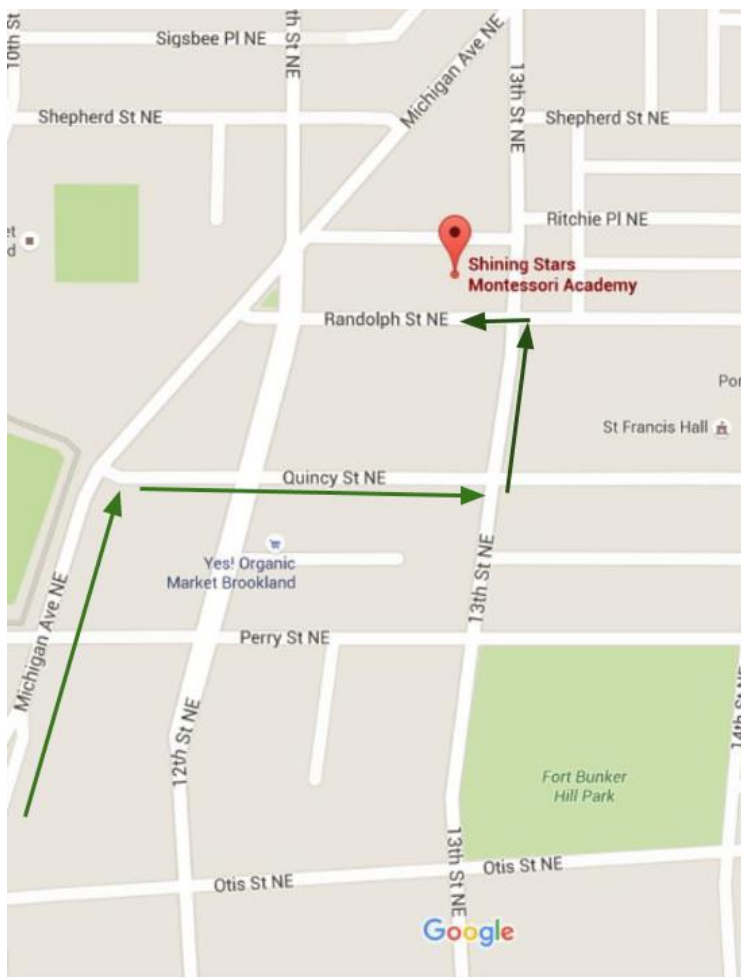
Travelling North on Michigan Ave

1. Turn right on Quincy St.
2. Turn left on 13th St.
3. Turn left on Randolph St.
4. Drop-off in front of the school (Kiss & Go)



Travelling South on 12th St

1. Turn left on Ritchie Pl.
2. Turn right on 13th St.
3. Turn right on Randolph St.
4. Drop-off in front of the school (Kiss & Go)



Travelling North on 12th St.

1. **Turn right on Quincy St.**
2. **Turn left on 13th St.**
3. **Turn left on Randolph St.**

4. **Drop-off in front of the school (Kiss & Go)**

GUIDE & STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION 2016-2017

Carole Beltrand	Special Education	Special Education Teacher	cbeltrand@shiningstarspcs.org
Shaneka Bush		Program Assistant	sbush@shiningstarspcs.org
Delton Fontroy	Keller Stars	Lower Elementary Guide (1 st -3 rd)	dfontroy@shiningstarspcs.org
Kyla Goss		Lower Elementary Classroom Assistant	kgoss@shiningstarspcs.org
Jose Guevara		Operations Associate	jguevara@shiningstarspcs.org
Lorraine Ivey		Kitchen Manager	livey@shiningstarspcs.org
Louise Kelley		Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary Writing Specialist	lkelley@shiningstarspcs.org
Danielle Lazzar	Montessori Stars	Primary Guide (PK3-K)	dlazzar@shiningstarspcs.org
Sandra Larios	Angelou Stars	Classroom Assistant	slarios@shiningstarspcs.org
Maia McKinney	Special Education	Special Education Coordinator	mmckinney@shiningstarspcs.org
Monique Mitchell	Admin	Director of Operations & Vendor Services	mmitchell@shiningstarspcs.org
Erma Molina	Bethune Stars	Primary Guide (PK3-K)	emolina@shiningstarspcs.org
Nina Ouzounova		Primary (PK3-K)	nouzounova@shiningstarspcs.org
Linsey Pointdujour	Gandhi Stars	Primary (PK3-K)	lpointdujour@shiningstarspcs.org
Baylen Wagner	Hughes Stars	Upper Elementary Guide (4 th -6 th)	bwagner@shiningstarspcs.org
Zufan "Zizi" Reddae	Montessori Stars		zreddae@shiningstarspcs.org
Kyurshawn "Kiki" Reese	Admin	Registrar/ Administrative Associate	kreese@shiningstarspcs.org
Aliya Rocker	Admin	Director of Enrollment and Family Support	arocker@shiningstarspcs.org
R. Rodriguez	Admin	Executive Director &	rrodriguez@shiningstarspcs.org

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

		Head of School	
John Shepherd		Classroom Assistant	jshepherd@shiningstarspcs.org
Sandy Simpson	Bethune Stars	Classroom Assistant	ssimpson@shiningstarspcs.org
Manisha Singh	Angelou Stars	Primary Guide	msingh@shiningstarspcs.org
Malayssa Smith-Woods	Mandela Stars	Classroom Assistant	msmith@shiningstarspcs.org
Cynthia Thompson	Operations/ Food Services	Program Assistant	cthompson@shiningstarspcs.org
Caroline Tran	Mandela Stars	Primary Guide (PK3-K)	ctran@shiningstarspcs.org
Kim Underwood	Academic	Montessori Instructional Coach (Primary)	kunderwood@shiningstarspcs.org
Thomas Vu	Academic Support Services	ELL Specialist	tvu@shiningstarspcs.org
Charlie Williams		Custodian	
Stephen Winchell	Admin	Director of Data, Compliance & Research	swinchell@shiningstarspcs.org
Jose 'Cody' Zapata	Admin	Program Assistant	jzapata@shiningstarspcs.org

ADMISSIONS and ENROLLMENT

APPLICATION & LOTTERY

Shining Stars is open and free to residents of the District of Columbia. In order to apply for admission to Shining Stars Montessori Academy (for PK3), a child must turn three years of age **by September 30th**. Applications may be found on the My School DC website www.MySchoolDC.org.

OPEN HOUSES

Shining Stars Montessori Academy hosts open houses throughout the school year to recruit new families. One of the best ways to share information about our school is through parent advocates. If you are interested in talking to prospective parents we hope that you will sign up when we request volunteers. You may contact the Director of Enrollment and Family Support at arocker@shiningstarspcs.org.

ENROLLMENT POLICIES

Preference: According to D.C. Charter Law, siblings of currently enrolled students may receive preference in the admissions process. The new sibling must submit an application by the advertised deadline for consideration in the lottery. Additionally, Shining Stars may give preference to the children of full-time staff members, board members and school founders, in accordance with federal regulations. Lastly, students who must withdraw from Shining Stars due to a parent's job relocation or some other urgent family matter may be allowed to re-enroll within two years pending the Executive Director's approval and seat availability. Re-enrollment is not guaranteed, but may be granted.

Re-Enrollment: Families of current students must submit a letter of intent to re-enroll for the subsequent academic year. An online form will be emailed and a hard copy will be available in the Main Office. Intent to re-enroll must be submitted by the advertised deadline or the student's spot will be forfeited and he/she will have to enter the lottery application process through My School DC.

FAMILY AND GUIDE "MEET AND GREET"

In SY14-15 Shining Stars Montessori Academy began our tradition of Family/Student "Meet & Greets". Families are welcome to visit their child's class to meet other families, students, and staff on Monday, August 29, 2016 from 8:30am-9:30am. We will maintain our staggered start schedule and have Kindergarten-5th grade students remain with us for the day. All other students (PK3 and PK4) must leave with their parents and should return to school according to their scheduled start date.

NEW AND RETURNING START DAYS (AUGUST)

Shining Stars will have staggered-admissions every school year, allowing for the older children to return to the classroom environment before the younger ones. See the school calendar for details.

SCHOOL POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Shining Stars is a school with high academic standards. In order for your child to have a complete Montessori experience we need to maximize the use of time. Being late and absent puts your child's development and subsequent academic performance in jeopardy. Your ability to ensure that your child arrives on-time and attends school consistently will help us to create a truly rich and meaningful school culture. It draws unnecessary attention to your child when he/she is tardy and may make him/her feel uncomfortable having to come into an already established, working environment.

Children who arrive after 8:30 need to be signed in at the reception desk prior to entering the classroom. Children arriving after will be considered tardy at 8:35pm. Teachers will admit tardy students into the classroom at 8:30 am. Until that time, parents are expected to wait with their child until he/she is admitted into the classroom.

We understand that there will be occasions when you need to pick up your child early for a doctor's appointment or similar obligation. To ensure that your child is ready, please send in a note in the **Blue Bag** to the classroom teacher letting them know the time that you will be picking up your child. Similarly, you may contact the Receptionist to inform the school of your child's early dismissal. When you arrive at school, please sign your child out at the reception desk.

Shining Stars expects that a child will miss school only when an illness requires them to remain at home or in the event of a family emergency.

Tardy Policy

Parents **must** sign-in late students at the reception desk. Students are considered late after 8:31 am. Please note: *Three (3) tardies equals one absence.*

Tardiness records will be kept for all students. All parents will be notified of their child's attendance status at each scheduled Parent-Teacher Conference. Parents are encouraged to notify their child's teacher *beforehand* of any changes in their schedules that would impact their child's attendance. Parents will be notified in writing when they are approaching the limit (3 or more tardies) and a parent conference will be called for persistent late arrivals (*5 or more in one month*), by the classroom teacher. Additional conferences may be requested by the Principal if it is deemed necessary.

Absences

Absence records are kept for all students and will be reported to the D.C. Public Charter Board and Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) as necessary and **as required for children 5 years and older**. Parents are encouraged to communicate any changes in their schedules to their child's teacher if their child's attendance at school will be impacted. All parents will be notified of their child's absences at the scheduled Parent-Teacher Conference. If your child has **five (5) unexcused absences**, the school will schedule a family conference to discuss concerns, possible consequences, and a plan of action. In the best interest of the child, students with ten (10) unexcused absences and a failure to comply with the attendance plan of action may result in school communication with the Department of Child Protective Services. Students with 18 or

Parent Handbook 2016-2017



more total absences for the year will be considered as “not meeting expectations.” Attendance is a major indicator for academic success.

Excused Absence/Tardiness: If you know your child will be late or absent, please call the Reception Desk at (202) 319-2307. An excused absence or tardiness must be accompanied with a note. Shining Stars has an online form for absences ([Absence Form](#)). You can also submit a handwritten note with your child’s name, date of birth, classroom name and reason for being absent/tardy when your child comes to school. If your child is late/absent due to a medical appointment or illness, the excuse should have the signature of the health care provider or other authorized person in order to be accepted. Your child will not be admitted to school after an absence due to illness unless accompanied by a doctor’s note.

Excused Absences include:

- Death in the student’s immediate family
- Illness of the student (a doctor’s note is required for a student absent more than three days)
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Medical reasons, such as a doctor’s appointment.

Unexcused Tardy/Absence: If you bring your child to school after **8:31 am**, you must sign him/her in at the Reception Desk. Three (3) unexcused tardies will amount to one (1) unexcused absence. Unexcused absences are recorded and will be reported in accordance with the Compulsory Attendance Law of the District of Columbia.

Early Pick-Up

Early dismissals follow the same rules as tardiness. If a student has to leave school early during school hours (does not include those 3 year old students who are to be dismissed by 1:30 pm), parents/guardians must notify the school in writing or by phone. Parents/guardians must check in at the reception desk to sign the student out. A child will not be released to anyone who has not previously been identified in the student’s file as a guardian or authorized to pick the child up. This person will be required to provide identification whenever requesting release. Parents must notify the school in advance of a change in pick up arrangements. Staff will bring the child to the front desk.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

SHINING STARS DAILY SCHEDULE						
Day	Before Care Begins/ Ends	Morning Arrival & Drop-Off	School Day Begins	Early Dismissal PreK- 3 only	School Day Ends	After Care & Extended Learning
Monday – Friday	7:00- 8:15 AM	8:15 – 8:30 AM	8:30 AM (Students are considered tardy at 8:31am)	1:30PM	3:30 PM (P)	3:30-6:00 PM ³
					3:30 PM (LE)	
					4:30 PM (3rd-5th grade MWT only)	

Morning Arrival begins promptly at 8:15 am so that children can be in class, ready to work by 8:30 am. Please refer to the memorandum attached outlining the drop off and pick up policy for the 2016-2017 school year.

We urge all families to be especially mindful of the following:

- Please make every effort to drop your child off at school on time. A delay of just a few minutes is very disruptive and makes it harder for your child to begin his/her day in a peaceful manner.
- Children who arrive after morning arrival concludes at 8:30 am **MUST** be accompanied into the building by an adult and signed in at the Reception Desk.
- Morning Arrival begins promptly at 8:10 am and ends at 8:25 am so that children can be in class and ready to work by 8:30 am. Please refer to the memorandum attached outlining the drop off and pick up policy for 2016-2017 school year. Either a Guide or a Classroom Assistant from each class will be in the hallway to help guide children to their classrooms as necessary and the other adult will be receiving your children in the classroom (Depending on preference, or particular scheduled activities Guides and CA's may opt to switch locations during arrival and dismissal times)

We urge all families to be especially mindful of the following:

- Please encourage/allow your child to walk down to their classroom independently. Your child's teacher is very busy during morning arrival time greeting students and helping them get started on their work and cannot meet to discuss specific concerns at this time. Contact your child's teacher in order to schedule an appointment if you have any questions or concerns.
- Please make every effort to drop your child off at school on time. A delay of just a few minutes is very disruptive and makes it harder for your child to begin his/her day in a peaceful manner.
- Children who arrive after morning arrival concludes at 8:30 am **MUST** be accompanied into the building by an adult and signed-in at the Reception Desk. Guides will only admit tardy students into the classrooms with a tardy slip.

- Making Separation Anxiety-Free. If your child is new to the 'school experience' they may display some separation anxiety during the first couple weeks of school. Please make 'goodbyes' consistent and brief and know that parting will get better as time goes on. The staff is trained on how to help children with this and all adults involved (parents/guardians, person handling drop-off, and school staff) must assure the child that they will be fine. It is atypical for a child to 'cry all day' and once involved in the classroom work and social life your child will settle down and become engaged in the routine of the day.
- If your child is experiencing separation anxiety, work closely with your child's teacher and maintain a positive attitude toward drop off time and keep goodbyes routine and short and sweet. It is recommended that goodbyes happen outside or in the lobby and that your child walk to their classroom independently as soon as possible. This will also lessen the duration and severity of the separation anxiety. There may be some reluctance from your child in returning to school the next day but consistency is a MUST and your child will become more comfortable with the separation as time goes on.

Early Dismissal (PK3 Students only)

Parents are encouraged to pick up 2 ½ to 3 year old students by 1:30 pm if they do not need to remain for the full day. You must select the early dismissal option on the enrollment form or submit a request via email to your child's Guide and the receptionist. Parents seeking to change from early dismissal to full day may do so in the month of January. The school discourages month-to-month changes in the child's daily schedule.

Afternoon Dismissal

Primary, 1st and 2nd grade students' afternoon dismissal occurs at 3:30 pm daily. Dismissal for 3rd-5th grade students is at 3:30 pm on Monday and Friday, and 4:30 pm Tuesday through Thursday. Please make sure to arrive during this time. Staff members will accompany your child to the dismissal point to await your arrival. In the event that an individual not on your Emergency Contact Form needs to pick up your child, please inform the Receptionist by phone, email or fax. This individual will need to come into the reception desk and present photo identification before your child can be released to him/her.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Students who are not picked up by 3:30 pm will remain with a staff member until he/she is picked up by a parent or guardian. **Families arriving for pick-up after 3:35 pm will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute. This fee must be paid in cash or check at the time of pick up.**

******Parents who pick up their children late three (3) or more times a week will be asked to enroll in the after-care program immediately. ******

Please remember:

- Keep your Emergency Contact Form up-to-date. If your child is being picked up by someone else or is going home with another child, we need to have **permission** from the parents directly via phone, email or fax.

WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN BRING TO SCHOOL

Only at the invitation of the guide can a child bring books, pictures, artifacts, or special items to share. If you go on a trip and your child collects objects or artifacts unique to the place you visited, or if you go on a walk with your child and find some interesting leaves or rocks/shells, you may ask your child's guide for permission to bring it into school to share. ***Please ensure that your child leaves all toys, candy, dolls, gum, toy cars, etc. at home or in your car. If a teacher must remove such an item from a child, Shining Stars cannot guarantee that it will be returned.***

BATHROOM INDEPENDENCE

The Montessori philosophy supports the building of a child's independence. We strongly encourage all children to be independent of toileting needs by the 1st day of school. Shining Stars Montessori Academy will work cooperatively with you to ensure your child is functionally independent in the bathroom. We do understand that children will have occasional accidents. Therefore, you will need to send three or more changes of clothing, labeled with your child's name on each article of clothing. We do not allow pull ups or diapers of any kind.

BREAKFAST/ SNACK AND LUNCH

****Shining Stars is a PEANUT-FREE and NUT-FREE school.***

We all know that our children learn better when they eat healthy, whole foods. Growing minds and bodies need plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy fats and proteins, and properly prepared whole grains. Many of our families and staff members are passionate about healthy eating habits, and Shining Stars is committed to providing children with access to healthy snacks and meals.

In our classrooms, we will eat together family style. Parents have the option of participating in our lunch program. Please check with the office if you are interested in your child receiving school lunch. If you will be preparing your child's lunch, please support our efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable living by packing healthy, whole foods (see *Suggestions for Delicious and Healthy Lunches* attached). Balance your child's midday meal with foods from a variety of different food groups and help us to minimize waste by using reusable containers and utensils, cloth napkins, and water bottles. Many children react negatively to dyes, artificial flavorings, and other chemicals and additives. **Please avoid packing snack or lunch items that contain such items, including partially hydrogenated oils and high fructose corn syrup.** Juices and flavored beverages are discouraged and will not be served to your child.

Also be sure to use containers that you know your child can open and close independently. It is always a good idea when you go shopping, to take your child along and have him/her actually try out the items before you purchase them. Enlist your child's participation in lunch preparation, and eventually, have your child to pack his/her own lunch with these guidelines in mind. *Please remember that children will not be able to keep their lunches refrigerated and they will not have access to a microwave oven.*

Snacks will generally be served in the classroom and are available to the children throughout the morning (8:30 am – 11:15 am) and afternoons (1:30 pm – 2:30 pm) work cycles. Snack can be provided individually or within a group setting. Please check with your child's Guide about their particular snack routines and how they will be arranging snack time and routines.

CELEBRATIONS AND BIRTHDAYS

Within the Montessori Method, a beautiful tradition for celebrating birthdays has evolved: The story of the child's life is told as s/he walks around a ceremonial sun. Each turn around the sun represents a year of the child's life. Your child's guide will ask you for help in preparing this special event. If you wish, you may send in a special snack in celebration of your child's special day, but please make sure this snack is not excessively sweet and contains no nuts, artificial dyes or food colors. Or you may choose to donate a book or a piece of Montessori material to your child's classroom. Please check with the Guide or school leadership about suggestions for books or for a catalogue of Montessori materials.

If you are hosting a celebration outside the class and inviting some families from school, please be mindful of the impact of such celebrations on class life. Please do not send birthday invitations to school as teachers will not be responsible for distributing them. Instead, you are encouraged to send the invitations through the regular mail, out of sensitivity to children not included in the celebration, and to avoid confusion with school-sponsored events. Joyful celebrations should be part of every childhood, and we thank you for your cooperation in ensuring these celebrations complement our program.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Family members may schedule an observation of their child's class by contacting the Guide and Director of Enrollment and Family Support (Aliya Rucker, arocker@shiningstarspcs.org). An adult observer has a unique and special role in a Montessori environment; Shining Stars does not allow "drop-in" observations. Observations should typically take about 15-30 minutes. Parents are encouraged to observe their child's classroom at least once during the school year. New families are **strongly encouraged** to do classroom observations as part of the new student enrollment process.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Parent/Guardian Expectations

Parents and guardians are expected to do the following:

- 1) adhere to the policies outlined in this Parent Handbook
- 2) be knowledgeable of the Montessori model and committed to a Montessori education for your child;
- 3) support and respect your child's social, emotional and academic development.
- 4) be an active participant in your child's education to include participation in parent-teacher conferences (3 a year) and participation in at least two (2) parent seminars each school year
- 5) attend school-wide events regularly

Student Responsibilities: Respect self, respect the environment, and respect your community.

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD'S GUIDE

We strive to maintain regular and clear communication with families through the black bag, emails and phone calls via One-Call Now, an automated communications system. Please check your child's Blue Bag daily for any communications from the office or your child's guide. If you have questions, comments or concerns regarding your child's classroom, please contact the classroom guide via the school telephone (202) 723-1467, by placing a note in their office mailbox or in your child's blue bag, or via e-mail. Please keep in mind that the guides need to focus their full attention on the children during the school day and will get in touch with you as soon as they are able. If you would like to discuss concerns in detail, please

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

schedule an appointment. For questions regarding the school or Montessori education, please feel free to contact the Principal and/or the Executive Director. We hope that you will join us for the various parent education events and special evenings throughout the year.

DRESS CODE

In following the Montessori philosophy of respect for each child's individuality and fostering their independence, Shining Stars does not have a formal uniform. However, families must adhere to the following guidelines:

- a. **CLOTHES:** Students should wear comfortable, seasonally appropriate clothing that they can easily put on and take off by themselves. Children are not permitted to wear any clothing that contains images of violence, violent characters, princesses, superheroes, or inappropriate subject matter. Shining Stars will not permit children to enter the classroom if they are wearing sleeveless tops, baggy pants that expose their underwear, undershirts with no covering, or mini-skirts without shorts. The Head of School will make decision regarding inappropriate clothing. Additionally, if a child is unprepared for outdoor activities in cold or wet weather, he/she may be required to remain indoors for safety reasons.
- b. **SHOES:** All students will be required to wear closed-toed, rubber-soled slippers/shoes in the classroom, which should be left in their cubbies at school. **Shoes for outdoor use should be closed-toed** and the child must be able to put them on and take them off independently (please no laces for children who have not mastered tying). **Children are not permitted to wear flip-flops or high-heels.** If your child does not have appropriate footwear for outdoor recreation, he/she may be required to remain in the office for safety reasons.
- c. **EXTRA CLOTHES:** Primary students are required to keep at least two changes of clothes at school (please see note about bathroom independence for extra clothes). Elementary students may keep one. Please review your child's change of clothes regularly to ensure that it fits and is weather appropriate.

FAMILY EVENTS

Throughout the school year, we will be planning different activities to help develop school-community spirit. Families are encouraged to participate in these events and assistance with the planning and organization of events is greatly appreciated. Please check with the Director of Enrollment and Family Support for more information.

FIELD TRIPS: A MONTESSORI 'SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS' – THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AS OUR CAMPUS

Shining Stars Montessori Academy PCS is located in the nation's capital and surrounded by a multitude of resources to support the learning of our children. Since consistency is so important for our young children in the Children's House and Elementary programs, we will also invite cultural resources to come to our school in addition to taking the children out on expeditions and field trips. The older Primary children (5-6) year olds, may occasionally go for walks around the neighborhood, go on a trip to the grocery store, or go on a trip to a local museum or attraction. We may need to collect funds from families in order to pay for these trips/events. Elementary students will regularly also go out on field trips to

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

conduct research for their individual or group projects. Parent volunteers as chaperones are welcome. Please check with your Guide for field trip schedules and other instructions.

FUNDRAISING

We are a public charter school, and as such we receive per pupil allotment funding. However, we still have need to secure additional funding to ensure the proper functioning of our school. Please contact the Executive Director if you are interested in planning a fundraising event or would like to make a donation.

LOST AND FOUND

To ensure your child maintains all of his/her belongings, please be sure to label everything with permanent marker. Lost & Found items will be kept in the office for a period of up to two weeks and at the end of the Fall and Spring trimester, after which they will be displayed in the hallway or in the main lobby. If items are left unclaimed, they will be donated to a local charity.

NAP AND REST TIME

Younger children in the Primary classes (3 year-olds) are encouraged (*but not required*) to take a nap in the afternoon; if they do not sleep they must rest quietly. Space and mats will be provided for napping. From time to time, any child may choose to take a nap with respect for their biological and physical needs and a space and mat will be provided for the child to use. We ask that you please send a small blanket so that your child can rest comfortably. All bedding will be sent home on Fridays for washing.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Shining Stars does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, religion, disability, socio-economic status, homelessness, or family structure.

ONE CALL NOW

One Call Now is an automated telephone service that will be used to inform parents of critical and/or emergency school issues. Critical notifications will be used in emergency situations. For instance, if early dismissal becomes necessary while classes are in session, or if there is a weather or security emergency, One Call Now will be utilized to notify parents as soon as possible. Be sure your phone number and email address is on file with the office.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

When a new child enters our community, we feel that a family, rather than an individual, has joined us. We value parents as partners in the great undertaking of the education of their children. We each have different responsibilities in the partnership. Ours is a professional one; yours is a parental one. It is important that we understand our distinct roles. If we expect children to value education and to achieve, adults must send clear and consistent signals that schooling takes priority.

Achieving one's potential takes priority over socializing, holiday travel, after-school activities, or any other activity. As a result, the school expects that families arrange their travel and holiday plans,

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

non-emergency medical appointments, and other activities to avoid a conflict with a student's academic and educational obligations.

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parents should feel free to contact Guides and staff at any time to discuss or review a student's academic or social progress. Guides should also be contacted to discuss situations which may be affecting a student's educational and/or social development. Formal parent--teacher conferences are scheduled **three times a year**; the dates are in the academic school calendar. Parent--teacher conferences typically last 20 minutes, and we encourage both parents and/or guardians to attend. It is important that you are informed about your child's performance. Although this is a formal meeting with specific information about your child's academic progress, we encourage you to maintain open communication with your child's teacher throughout the year

PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

Shining Stars Montessori Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is organized for the purpose of fostering collaboration and communication between all SSMA families and staff in an inclusive environment to support the school's mission. All Shining Stars Montessori parents are automatically members of this group. The PTO leadership team seeks to mobilize all families to support academic and enrichment activities, organize volunteer opportunities and provide financial support. **Parent Cafés** will now be **Coffee with the ED/Principal**, a PTO sponsored activity held regularly throughout the year. The event is an opportunity for parents to informally gather to meet one another and school leadership to share on-going information regarding school activities and events. Review the school calendar for PTO meeting dates and times. Additional information about PTO activities and events can be found at www.shiningstarspcs.org.

PARENTS VOLUNTEERISM

To help ensure Shining Stars Montessori Academy meets our ambitious objectives, we rely on parent support and participation. We believe everyone has something to contribute! Parents/guardians are asked to serve a minimum of 10 hours of volunteer service per family. Parents may assist in the classroom, serve on parent committees and/or assist with special events, such as field trips, book fairs, and school celebrations. We encourage parents to share any hobbies or special interests with their child's class and/or the school. Please contact your child's Guide so that arrangements can be made for such visits. Parents should complete a volunteer interest survey in order to help facilitate a volunteer role in the school. For more information on committees and/or volunteer hours, contact the Director of Enrollment and Family Support.

PEACE AND COMMUNITY GATHERING ASSEMBLY (LAST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH)

Each month from September to June, Shining Stars students, staff, and parents join together in a celebration of peace and community. Check the Shining Stars calendar and school bulletin for dates.

PROMOTION & ‘STEPPING UP’

Montessori instruction accommodates the varying interests and academic development of individual students. Students will progress each year by completing the Montessori and Common Core State curriculum standards necessary to support their success at the next grade level.

When considering promotion (accelerating a student an additional grade level), the child’s social and emotional growth is to be taken into consideration. Teachers and the Head of School will determine if this is the best course of action for the student by using criteria such as intellectual maturity, academic achievement, including standardized testing, physical, social, psychological, and emotional considerations.

Students are to be identified for promotion on the basis of:

- Academic achievement and standardized testing
- Physical, social, psychological, and emotional considerations
- Information provided by teacher(s), parents, or guardians
- The demonstration of individual student learning is to be measured by, but not limited to, the following:
 - Student grades in Reading/Language Arts and Math (more than one grade level above / below benchmark on DIBELS, PPVT, and /or TEMA)
 - Guide observations/assessments in Reading/Language Arts and Math (more than one grade level above and/ or below/above benchmark on DIBELS, PPVT or TEMA assessments)
 - District of Columbia assessment scores in Language Arts and Math PARCC (assessing at advanced in all subject areas)
 - Writing Assessment (same as above)
 - Modifications of curriculum and the grading rubric are to be utilized for students or on an IEP (Individual Education Plan). Accommodations put in place for students who have a 504 Plan or are in Special Education are not used when considering retention of the student.
- Retention may be considered for students on a 504 Plan or IEP if the academic, social, and emotional needs of the student would benefit from the repetition of a grade. The IEP or 504 team would make the recommendation for retention.

Appeals Process

When the recommendation for promotion is not agreed upon by the parents/guardians, they have the right to appeal to the SSMA Board of Directors after first bringing their appeal to the principal and executive director. The principal will provide the executive director and/or Board of Directors documentation regarding the recommended promotion or retention to include, but not limited to, testing and assessment results, report cards, and SST meeting notes.

RECESS

Shining Stars will make every effort to ensure that children are safe when we are outdoors. If the weather permits we will have daily recess outside. Please be sure that your child wears appropriate shoes (*closed toe*) and brings the appropriate clothing during cold weather months (hat, gloves, scarf, warm coat), and that you apply their sunscreen before leaving the house in the morning.

SCHOOL CONTACTS

If you have particular questions or concerns, please use the following as a resource for identifying the appropriate staff person:

Contact your child's Guide/Teacher for matters related to:

- Your child's progress
- Classroom activities and/or schedules
- Work-at-Home activities and/or calendar
- Classroom procedures
- Parent conferences

Contact the Director of Operations for matters related to:

- Drop off and Pick up/Parking
- School lunch program
- Payment for school lunch, field trips, or other fees
- Issue with any vendors providing services to the school
- Emergency Preparedness
- All Facilities & Real Property Issues (interior and exterior)
- Building Security
- Purchasing

Contact the Director of Enrollment and Family Support for matters related to:

- Student Records/Files
- Student Admissions
- Aftercare/Extended Learning
- Volunteering
- Classroom Observations/School Tours
- Extracurricular activities
- Health and Wellness Programming
- Parent Teacher's Organization & PTO Events

Contact the Director of Academic Support and Clinical Services

- Student interventions and the Student Support Team
- Counseling referrals
- Special Education Services

Contact the Head of School/Executive Director for matters related to:

- Montessori Curriculum
- Common Core Standards alignment
- General concerns regarding your child or Guide child's teacher
- Major changes in your child's life

Parent Handbook 2016-2017



- Student Progress and Achievement Outcomes
- Parent workshops
- Montessori Academy
- Attendance
- Student Behaviors and Classroom Management
- Student Assessment
- Professional Development for Teachers
- All matters related to teaching & learning at SSMA

Contact the Executive Director, for matters related to:

- Academic Issues & Facilities
- Governance
- Legal Matters
- Personnel Issues
- Fundraising
- School operations and policies

STUDENT FOLDERS AND/OR ‘THE BLUE BAG’

In addition to the school folders, each classroom has student folders **that parents/guardians should check daily**. Classroom/teacher notes, snack schedules, and student work will be placed in the classroom folders. Both school and classroom folders should be checked regularly. If your child is regularly picked up by someone else, please remind him or her to check the folders and/or bring the **BlueBag** home.

VISITORS

All visitors to the school must sign in and obtain a visitor pass at the Reception Desk and present valid photo identification upon arrival, and sign-out before leaving the building.

WORK-AT-HOME

Primary Grades (3-6 years)

Shining Stars Montessori Academy will assign work-at-home to Primary students in the form of a monthly ‘work-at-home’ calendar. A new calendar will be sent home at the beginning of each month. The calendar consists of practical life tasks that can be performed daily—and at home. The calendar may also present some tasks that your child may have already mastered and some that may be unfamiliar to them. We suggest that those activities be practiced continuously, not only on the dates they are assigned.

Lower Elementary (6-9 years)

Your child’s guide will send work-at-home for your child to practice based on the individual needs of the child. Your child’s guide will communicate with you regarding work-at-home for your child.

OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

Anti-Harassment And Anti-Bullying Policy

It is the express policy of Shining Stars that it does not, and will not, tolerate harassment of or discrimination against any employee, student, or parents, guardians, or caretakers on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other basis protected by law as such harassment and discrimination is strictly prohibited.

The school's 2016-2017 Anti-Bullying policy is posted on line for parents. See also the school's website for the full policy document (<http://www.shiningstarspcs.org>)

Drug-Free Zone

Manufacturing, distributing, possessing, or using of any illegal drug, alcohol, or controlled substance while on the school's premises is strictly prohibited. These activities constitute serious violations of the school rules, jeopardize the school, and can create situations that are unsafe or that substantially interfere with school safety.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Shining Stars will treat all student records confidentially. Student records and special education files will be secured in separate locked filing cabinets.

According to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, parents have the right to review the complete school records of their children. Parents may review their child's record by submitting a written request to the Director of Teaching and Learning which will be responded to within 24 hours. Shining Stars will not send or show student records to anyone outside the school without first obtaining written permission from parents/guardians.

Information, known as "directory information," may be disclosed by Shining Stars in accordance with the law without permission, for instance, when required to do so by subpoena issued by a court or by a government authority with power to issue such subpoenas. "Directory information" means information contained in an education record of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed, and may include the following information relating to a student:

- The student's name
- Address and telephone number
- Dates of attendance

Health, Safety and Security Procedures

a. Emergency Contact Information

ACCESS TO UP-TO-DATE CONTACT INFORMATION AT ALL TIMES FOR EACH STUDENT IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR STUDENTS' SAFETY. In the event of an emergency, the office will call an ambulance before calling the parents/guardians. Emergency medical forms for each student are on file in the event of an emergency. Parents/guardians should ask to review their child's medical forms if they have questions or need to make changes.

b. Physical and Emotional Information

Parents/guardians must inform the school if a child has been injured physically or emotionally. Having this information will insure that the school makes appropriate accommodations for the child (e.g. not going to health & fitness if physically injured or providing any other support the child may need, taking additional care in supporting a child who has just experienced a death in the family, or knowing about an injury that happened over the weekend while playing).

First aid

We are delighted to have a Registered Nurse from the DC Department of Health who will be sharing her time between our campus and another school. That said, the first-aid care the school can provide is very limited. If a child is hurt or complains of an illness, the teacher or administrator will treat simple cuts or bruises by applying a bandage or ice, but cannot administer more serious medical treatment. The Front Office or School Nurse will call the parent/guardian in the event of a more serious injury or illness and the student will be kept in the office until the parent/guardian arrives to pick up the child.

All Shining Stars Montessori staff are certified by the Red Cross in Pediatric and Adult CPR administration.

Illness

In order to maintain a healthy school, parents/guardians must not send their children to school with any contagious diseases such as the flu, strep throat, chickenpox, measles, conjunctivitis (pink eye), ringworm, scabies, or lice. Students with any of these conditions will be sent home from school until they are no longer contagious. Parents must pick up their child within two hours of being notified that their child is sick with a contagious illness. Shining Stars Montessori Academy may request that the parent/guardian provide a doctor's note showing that their child is no longer contagious. Please notify the front office if you discover that your child may have been exposed to a contagious disease.

If your child is not feeling well in the morning, particularly if he or she has a fever of 100 degrees or more, **do not send him or her to school**. Parents/guardians should not send their children to school within 24 hours of vomiting or running a fever of 100 degrees or higher. Students should not return to school until 24 – 36 hours after beginning the course of antibiotics.

If your child has lice, we ask that the child is treated thoroughly. Upon return, your child needs to be rechecked by our nurse or designated staff member BEFORE returning the classroom. If additional nits/eggs are found, the child will need to return home for additional treatments. Our nurse is available for consultation regarding the most effective treatments for lice removal.

Medications

Medication cannot be administered without a completed Medication Administration Authorization Form. The Medication Administration Authorization Form is available at the Front Desk. No medications, including over-the-counter medications, should be sent to school with your children. All medication must be brought in by a parent or guardian and kept in the Front Office. We strongly encourage parents/guardians to administer short-term medications, such as antibiotics, at home.

These medical policies and procedures are subject to change according to current local, state, and federal policy. Families will be notified in writing when and if there are any changes. Due to several students having serious allergic reactions, WE ARE A NUT FREE SCHOOL.

Child and family services agency mandated reporting

Every staff member and long-term volunteer at Shining Stars Montessori Academy is a “mandated reporter” requiring the reporting of any suspected abuse or neglect to DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). Below is the process and guidelines that Shining Stars Montessori Academy staff members follow.

Anyone involved in the care and treatment of children under the age of 18 are considered “mandatory reporters” and are required to report cases of child abuse and neglect. According to DC Code 2-1357, any mandatory reporter who fails to make a report will be fined or imprisoned. If child abuse or neglect is suspected, mandated reporters must immediately call DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) reporting hotline at (202) 671-SAFE (671-7233).

Mandated reporters must call the CFSA hotline immediately, even if all the information is not available. If requested, reports may be required to follow up with a written report to the CFSA. Once an abuse report is filed, CFSA will assess and investigate the case. CFSA determines the nature, extent, and cause of child maltreatment and assesses possible risk to the child if left in the situation. Please note that staff members who report suspected abuse or neglect are not allowed to disclose the report to parents or guardians.

Insurance

Students’ medical needs, including those that may arise on school grounds, must be covered by parents’/guardians’ insurance. Parents/guardians should notify the office if they do not have insurance for their child or have any questions about their child’s insurance coverage. The school may be able to provide information to parents/guardians interested in obtaining health insurance.

Security

To maximize time for student learning and development, Shining Stars Montessori Academy will be a safe, orderly, and organized school. School-wide expectations for student and adult behavior will be clear and actions taken will be consistent, respectful, and developmentally appropriate.

Emergency contingency plan

In the event of an emergency (e.g. a lock-down or evacuation of the building) our main concern is the safety of our students and staff. Parents will be called and notified as to the status of the situation, location of their child, and status of the scheduled activities for the day as soon as possible given the situation. **IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT WE HAVE CORRECT CONTACT INFORMATION AT ALL TIMES.** If your phone numbers change, please notify the Director of Enrollment and Family Support and/or the Registrar. If the campus must be evacuated students, faculty and staff will be directed to the pre-planned evacuation route.

Fire Drills

Fire Drills are conducted monthly to prepare staff and students for a safe and orderly evacuation of the building in case of an emergency.

No Child Left Behind

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* of 1965 (ESEA), reauthorized as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), is designed to improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. NCLB helps to shape academic standards and benchmarks for students at Shining Stars and nationwide. Shining Stars will comply with the mandates contained in the ESEA.

Title I

Pursuant to Title I of the ESEA, the United States Department of Education provides funding to schools and school districts in exchange for full compliance with ESEA. In accordance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Title I requirements, parents have a right to request and receive information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teacher. Parents seeking this information should contact the Main Office.

Title I also enables children who qualify to receive free or reduced lunch. Please see the Main Office for guidelines for the school's and/or your child's eligibility for Title I services and support.

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM: PRIMARY & ELEMENTARY

The Montessori Philosophy: ‘It’s not school....It’s Montessori’

Dr. Maria Montessori, an engineer, physician, and an educator, developed an approach to education that would assist the child in his development. This approach to education has been used in schools around the world for more than 100 years. The Montessori method is based upon careful observation.

The theory behind Montessori education is effortless: Children yearn for learning. From the time of birth through maturity, the child lives in what appears to be a chaotic world. Then the child gradually establishes order by learning to distinguish the senses and develop their inner resources resulting in a secure, self-confident learner.

The purpose of Montessori schools is to offer a cautiously planned, thought-provoking environment, which will help the child develop a foundation for innovative learning. Montessori classrooms provide a prepared environment where children are free to investigate their natural drive to work and learn. Montessori teachers embrace the whole-child approach to teaching. This means that we do not just focus on the academics. Skills in grace and courtesy and everyday living skills are also of extreme importance.

Maria Montessori developed the apparatus to enhance opportunities for the child to explore concrete examples of abstract ideas. The learning is a self-correcting one, allowing the child to move through the senses and discern concepts under the direction of a skilled Montessori trained guide. Each piece of material teaches a single skill, and is introduced to the child when he is ready to receive instruction based upon interests and ability levels.

The Montessori approach believes that children are more receptive to learning experiences at specific times or during the “sensitive periods.” Montessori guides are trained to recognize these sensitive periods when the child exhibits a need for a new learning experience. It is then that the guide directs the child toward materials that will compliment his developmental needs. During these critical years, the child moves at his/her own pace, creating an environment for discovery learning. Today, there are schools throughout the world offering Montessori programs for children beginning at birth and going to three years (Infant/Toddler), 3-6 years of age (Primary), 6-9 years of age (Lower Elementary), 9-12 years of age (Upper Elementary) and 12-18 years of age (Adolescent). According to research, there almost 5,000 Montessori schools/programs in the U.S. and more than 20,000 in over 100 countries worldwide.(AMI/USA Bulletin 2012).

The Shining Stars Children’s House: Serving Children ages 3-6 in the Primary Program

Children in the first plane of development, aged 3-6, have an amazing ability to absorb all the world around them has to offer through their senses. The rich environment of the Children’s House is carefully prepared to expose these absorbent minds to inviting and culturally diverse materials that are sure to captivate the interest of the young explorer. Many of the Montessori materials are designed to promote functional independence as the child gains mastery of self-care and care of their environment. The environment also enables children to develop personal dignity and an awareness of their responsibilities as human beings. Like the home environment, the Children’s House provides children with a comfortable and safe space to begin their journey toward maturity. As they choose the materials that appeal to them

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

and are guided in their proper use, children begin to develop the inner discipline and lifetime love of learning that is crucial to their success as human beings.

There are four core areas of learning in the Primary classroom and two sub-areas that are integrated into these four core areas:

I. Practical Life

Through the use of uniquely designed materials, the child learns to perform the basic actions that lead to functional independence through activities that involve care of the self, care of the environment and health and nutrition. The goal is for the child to develop concentration through repetition of these activities in addition to developing independence, coordinated movement, fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination and a sense of order. This area is the foundation for all the other areas.

II. Language

The materials and activities in this area are designed to give the child a working knowledge of syntax and grammar and enrich his/her vocabulary, as well as practice in public speaking. The idea is always to move from the concrete to the abstract, each activity building upon the next until the child demonstrates through speech and other activities, his/her mastery of the language.

III. Sensorial

The child's use of the sensorial materials will facilitate a refinement of the child's senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste); assist the child in classification, gradually developing finer and finer distinctions; and lead to abstract thought, always moving from the tangible and concrete to the abstract as the child learns to record sensory impressions accurately. This area includes music and biology.

IV. Mathematics

The materials in this area are physical representations of mathematical concepts—this includes geometry. It is important for the child to have access to mathematical experiences through sensorial manipulation. Qualities of the other five core areas can be found in the approach to mathematics and the idea is to give the whole concept first and then move on to the details. There are six basic groups of mathematics instruction and each one is presented in a three-step pattern: a concrete experience of the concept, followed by isolation of the concept and finally, a combination of the concrete with the abstract.

i. Cultural Activities

This area encompasses his/her and geography and social justice issues. Again, the approach is to give the child a sense of the whole his/her of humanity and then move into the finer details, utilizing storytelling, experiments and limited field trips, with the child taking on more and more the burden of exploration as her abilities increase. The world is presented as a whole and then the child is encouraged to explore the details individually. This area provides the perfect entrée for the cultural empowerment curriculum. The learning materials used and subject areas covered with the cultural activities will be inclusive of all cultures around the world and will reflect the cultures of the children in the classroom.

ii. Creative Activities

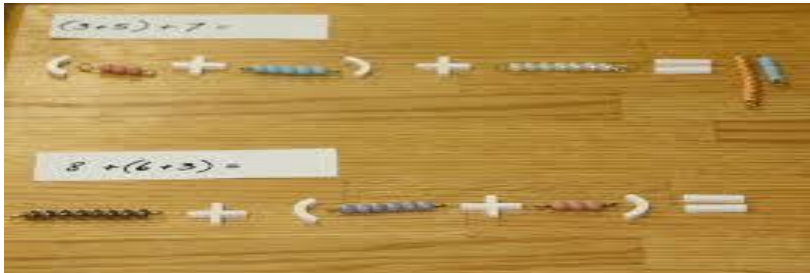
This includes art, music, drama and poetry, in addition to writing. Elements of each of these are interwoven with the other core areas whenever possible and the child is encouraged to engage the imagination in trying to figure out solutions to classroom problems as well as societal problems. As their awareness of these issues increases, the burden of responsibility gradually increases as well

The Elementary Program

A Shining Stars Montessori Academy Elementary education is student-tailored for each child. It also covers more than just the traditional academic curricula area; it is an education of the whole child: cognitively, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. The curriculum follows the child instead of forcing the child to follow the curriculum along with every other child at the same time. Only by following and studying the child can teachers match their efforts and provide appropriate jobs and environment tailored to the child's developmental needs. At Shining Stars Montessori Academy, we seek to nurture children's natural desire to learn in order that they will develop to their fullest potential.

Each day, children in the Elementary classrooms follow a routine that allows them to have confidence in the rhythm of the day and a sense of control in their environment. After arrival, children have time ("Morning Connections") where the students discuss their community time for the week and set out the routine of that particular day.

Children then move into the uninterrupted work time, when they are allowed to choose from work on which they have had lessons. Each child has a learning plan to complete during the week, and they are responsible, with gentle encouragement and guidance, to make sure they complete the work for which they are responsible. Rather than being in an environment that makes work sound mundane and boring to children, they learn to associate work with things they can accomplish and creating a sense of achievement and fun.



The Montessori philosophy considers "holistic development of the child to be essential". Work focuses on multiple forms of learning, stressing not only cognitive exercises but also tactile and auditory development. This is a time of high growth for the child, where she or he still rapidly absorbs the sights, sounds, and experiences in the world around her. Thus, in addition to regular classroom routine, each week the children in Elementary have art and

music times, as well as Spanish. Outside time in nature is a critical element of the Shining Stars Montessori philosophy as well, and Elementary students will have the benefit of an outdoor classroom and nature to explore.

Elementary serves in many ways as a continuation of the foundation built in the Primary classrooms. Some of the same activities remain from the Primary classroom, ones that are “developmentally appropriate and help foster confidence and personal growth across a range of developmental schema. At the same time, new work is added to help the student continue to progress, ensuring growth across the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual realms.” Montessori materials are laid out in an organized fashion throughout the classroom, at levels that are appropriate for children in this age range. The entire classroom is designed with the children’s needs in mind.

Mathematics

Math concepts at Shining Stars are aligned with the Common Core and presented in a logical sequence, beginning with the concrete and leading to the abstract. Understanding takes precedence over memorization, which develops through repeated work with the operations. Through student work with the Montessori and other supporting materials, Elementary students are introduced to advanced mathematical concepts. Operations are presented in the following order: addition, multiplication, division, and subtraction.

Geometry

Geometrical concepts that are introduced at the sensorial level in the Primary Program, are explored further through the use of Montessori materials in Elementary. The study of geometric solids, lines, angles, basic shapes, plane figures, polygons, and quadrilaterals form an important foundation for further exploration of geometrical concepts.

Language

Language studies include multiple forms of learning in the Montessori Elementary classroom. Reading and writing are widely used forms of language development both through formal activities and daily interactions in all forms of communication. Students also focus on vocabulary development and word study. Through introduction to research, students also learn about paraphrasing, applying appropriate grammar and conceptual analysis, as well as developing oral presentations and performances to share their learning. All language curriculum is an alignment of Montessori standards and specialized materials with the Common Core.

Science & Cultural Studies including the “Great Lessons”

In the Elementary classrooms, science and cultural studies are a central part of the shining a Stars Montessori Academy students’ learning. Lessons are planned in both history and geography. Science lessons span the areas of geology, botany, zoology, physical science, and the scientific method. The Elementary classroom also includes the “Great Lessons”: the Coming of the Universe, the Coming of Life, the Coming of Humans, the Coming of Language, and the Coming of Numbers.

Peace Education

The peace curriculum is a central part of Shining Stars Montessori Academy education. The focus of the lessons includes problem solving among peers, the cause of conflicts and why some conflicts lead to violence, as well as considering alternative solutions and problem solving techniques.

Field Trips/"Going Out"

Maria Montessori called for "going out" to be an integral part of the elementary child's education. Trips to the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, the Smithsonian museums, Frederick Douglass House and the National Colonial Farm in Accokeek are just some of the places we plan to visit over the three-year cycle of the Elementary Program.

Community Service

Students will be encouraged to bring forth areas of need in the community they are interested in making better. This will help develop awareness of the needs of others in their community. We will begin our community service outreach by coordinating a food drive for Martha's Table and S.O.M.E. (So Others Might Eat)

Music (Instrumental & Voice)

Music is an integral part of the Montessori philosophy. Consistent exposure to musical instruments, musical note work, and rhythm and melody work are a core part of the Shining Stars Academy philosophy of holistic development of the child.

Art

Regular art lessons will be included in the Elementary classrooms. Lessons will span the scope of visual arts, including drawing, painting, and sculpting.

Physical Education/Health and Wellness

In addition to extracurricular physical education options, regular physical education will be included in the Elementary classroom.

World Language Exploration at SSMA

In addition to students working with our school Spanish language program (Language Stars) Spanish materials will be included on our shelves. Spanish will be taught as part of the regular day with children learning everyday terminology and grammar that they will need to converse in their classroom.

Common Core and Montessori Curriculum Alignment

Shining Stars has aligned the Montessori Curriculum with the Common Core Standards to ensure students are meeting state learning standards.

Student Information System @ Shining Stars Montessori Academy

Shining Stars Montessori Academy uses Montessori Compass, a cloud based record keeping system. To regularly monitor student progress, the school tracks each student's work, mastery of content, and teacher observations. Montessori Compass enables the school to generate 'on demand' reports on student progress throughout the school year.

ASSESSMENTS AND TESTING

Informal Assessment - The Montessori guide is a trained observer and assessor of the child. Regular, recorded observations of the child's progress form the basis of the child's assessment records. Guides will use an appropriate combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment tools. Guides will also track growth using journals and portfolios, group discussions, self- and peer-assessments, curriculum-based assessments, and meetings between the child and the guide. These regular observations also inform the guide's plan of instruction for each individual child. Shining Stars will perform performance based standardized assessments of three and four year-old students and achievement and performance based assessments of older children in the Fall, Winter and Spring and the results will be reported to parents and the Public Charter School Board as part of our Early Childhood Performance Management requirement as a public charter school. Lower Elementary in the 3rd grade, will take the PARCC district mandated assessment (this replaces the DC-CAS) testing beginning in 2014-15. See the school's schedule of assessments for the 2016-2017 school year.

Assessment Tools	Month
Pre--- IPT, K--- WAPT Standardized assessment used to measure the English Proficiency of English Language Learners, given to pre--- k and K students who indicated on the Home Language Survey that a language other than English is spoken at home (exclusively or in addition to English).	Fall
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) Standardized assessment that measures vocabulary for PK3-Kindergarten	Fall, Spring
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy (DIBELS) Standardized assessment that measures early literacy development. (1st - 2nd Grade)	Fall, Winter, Spring
Test of Early Mathematics Ability (TEMA) – PK3 – 2nd grade Based benchmark assessment tool for mathematics.	Fall, Spring
WIDA: ACCESS for ELLs This large--- scale test addresses the academic English language proficiency (ELP) standards at the core of the WIDA Consortium's approach to instructing and evaluating the English proficiency of English Language Learners in 1--- 5.	Spring

MONTESSORI ACADEMY (MONTHLY)

In order to extend the education and development of our students and their families, Shining Stars will hold **Montessori Saturday Academy on the third Saturday of the month**. These Saturday sessions will provide pre- readiness and additional social and academic support for students, while simultaneously allowing parents an opportunity to network, discuss their concerns, talk about general parenting issues, and learn more about the Montessori Method and child development. Primary students will partake in cultural empowerment activities, social skill-building activities, games and projects, such as crafts, music and movement exercises.

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

Elementary students will also partake in similar culturally enriching activities as well as academic enrichment, recreational and test-preparation activities (3rd graders only).

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)

The Response to Intervention Model (RTI) is a three---tiered education model. Tier I features a core academic curriculum, clear behavioral expectations and academic/behavior screeners to assess student's academic and social achievement. Tier II and Tier III provide students with academic and behavior interventions to help them reach their fullest potential. We focus on early literacy skills, mathematics, behavior, and using data to guide instruction.

Tier I is the foundation of Shining Stars' educational philosophy. Shining Stars primarily utilizes Montessori education, the Peace Curriculum, Responsive Classroom and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports to promote the academic and behavioral success of students. However, some students may need additional support. **Tier II and Tier III** interventions provide students with research and teacher---based interventions. Some students receiving Tier II interventions may have a Student Support Team (SST). The SST may consist of teachers, parents, administrators, service providers and support staff that collaborate to develop an intervention plan to improve the academic performance and social competency of students. Parents and/or teachers can make an SST referral. Students receiving Tier III interventions must have a SST or an Individualized Education Plan.

Montessori and the RTI (Response to Intervention) Model:

RTI refers to an individual, comprehensive student-centered assessment and intervention concept. RTI is often referred to as a problem-solving method. RTI models focus on applying a problem-solving framework to identify and address a student's difficulties using effective, efficient instruction and leading the child to improved achievement. Montessori speaks to RTI through its design. Montessori's on-going intervention and assessment strategies support students on a continual basis.

RTI can also be diagnostic, providing evidence that a student with significant learning delays may have a learning disability if he/she fails to catch up with peers despite well-implemented, research-based interventions. Montessori can support RTI through the diagnostic and self-correcting materials. Through constant and consistent observation, teachers can address areas of difficulty and intervene with support materials to increase understanding in specific areas. Montessori record keeping and anecdotal records are of great importance in understanding the students and addressing their developmental, academic, and behavioral needs.

RTI is a multi-tiered, school-wide, service delivery model that combines assessment and instruction in making data-based decisions about a student's progress by continually monitoring that progress. Montessori assessment is on-going and consistent. The didactic materials, record-keeping, and observation are part of everyday life in the classroom.

Main Focuses of RTI :

Early identification and early intervention – The Montessori curriculum begins at age 3 with a multi-age 3, 4, and 5 year old program. A graduated series of increasingly intensive interventions guided

by data-based decision making – The Montessori classroom is an increasingly intensive program based on concrete developmental skills that allow students to gain solid understanding of the curriculum.

Montessori addresses all four principles of RTI:

1. Universal Screening – this is ongoing through the didactic materials and observation.
2. Intervention – the didactic materials align to the curriculum and instructional levels; are provided ‘in the classroom’ and ‘by the classroom teacher’.
3. Progress Monitoring – through on-going assessment and observation.
4. Intervention Efficacy and Fidelity – the Montessori program is consistent from age 3 to 12. The training is also consistent for all Montessori levels: 3 – 6 years, 6 – 9 years, and 9 -12 years.

Response to Intervention’s goal is to meet the needs of all students at risk for failure, whether or not they qualify for a legislated program. Response to Intervention is an individual, comprehensive, student-centered problem-solving process that can be implemented in the general education classroom. Educators employ research-based interventions in their efforts to increase student achievement. Response to Intervention then uses systematic monitoring of student progress to track student success. A student’s lack of response to regular education interventions becomes the determinant of need for additional, more intense interventions. The foundation of RTI practices consists of a set of beliefs, values and practices that work together to improve teaching and learning for all students.

Core Principles of RTI:

1. We can effectively teach all children
2. Intervene early
3. Use of a three tier model of service delivery
 - a. Tier 1- Universal Interventions
 - b. Tier 2- Universal Interventions and Supplemental or Strategic Interventions
 - c. Tier 3- Universal Interventions, Supplemental/Strategic Interventions and Intensive Interventions
4. Employ a problem-solving methodology and Data-based decision-making is focused on four questions:
 - a. What is the problem?
 - b. Why is it happening?
 - c. What should we do about it?
 - d. Did what we try work?

5. Implement research-based, scientifically-validated interventions/instruction
6. Monitor student progress to inform instruction – routine progress monitoring
7. Use data to make decisions
8. Assess for three different purposes:
 - a. Screening: identifying who in the general student population might have a problem worthy of further assessment
 - b. Diagnosing: identifying what specific instruction students need based on their performance on diagnostic assessments
 - c. Progress monitoring: identifying whether the instruction provided is working.

RTI follows a Tiered Framework:

Tier 1 – Montessori protects the uninterrupted work cycle (2 to 2-1/2 hrs.); is a universal intervention; is facilitated by the classroom teacher.

Tier 2 (supplemental interventions) – Montessori allows for individual work with the Montessori trained staff. The work is individualized or can be designed for small group. The consistency of the teacher training program provides a strong link for the students as support staff receive the same training.

Tier 3 (intensive interventions) – Montessori provides the support for intense intervention by all trained Montessori staff.

In summary, Montessori will address the needs of students ages 3 through 12. Through early intervention and the use of developmentally appropriate materials, students will gain a concrete understanding of the curricular areas as well as developing their fine and gross motor skills. The consistency and repetition of the method supports the child's development from the concrete stage to abstract understanding. The sense of order and level of concentration developed by young child builds independence and a positive sense of self.

It should be noted that all levels of intervention outlined by RTI are integral to the everyday functioning of a Montessori classroom. Teachers are trained to diagnose through the student's use of the materials as well as design materials necessary to remediate, support, and reinforce concepts and understanding. The Montessori Method addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students. Montessori is an education for life.

Tier III

Interventions

Academic:

SST follow up, IEP

Behavior:

BIP

Tier II Interventions

Academic:

Reading and Math
Interventions, Progress
Monitoring, Targeted
Instruction, and Tutoring,
Begin SST

Behavior:

Tier I

**Core Academic Curriculum and
Behavior Expectations**

Academic:

Montessori
Curriculum and
Academic Screeners

Behavior:

Montessori Curriculum PRIS Peace

The Student Support Team (SST)

The SST process is encouraged as a first step, since it is required that all possible efforts be made to accommodate children in the general education classroom, since this is considered to be the least restrictive environment.

The SST Team coordinates services and initiatives related to academics, attendance, positive school culture, and health and wellness to ensure that all students receive appropriate support and necessary intervention. The SST assesses student academic and behavioral needs, identifies goals, strategies, and intervention, and evaluates the effectiveness of interventions and the need to continue or close the case. Students can be referred to the SST process by parents and/or teachers.

Student support teams serve as an early---warning system to identify struggling students and provide them with additional support. They help schools intervene earlier with students who face challenges (e.g., academically not on grade level, chronically absent or truant, at risk for grade level retention). The Student Support Team is not a static group of people. Student Support Team Members consist of an administrator and interested parties (parent, teacher and school counselor), including homeless liaison, if required. The team membership varies depending upon who the child is and what group of people need to be brought together to support the specific behavior or academic concern that has been identified as needing additional support.

The Student Support Team and Response to Intervention – Early Intervention for Academic and Behavioral Supports

Shining Stars aims to offer a solid core academic, behavior, and socio-emotional development program and will utilize screeners to assess student's academic achievement and readiness and social-emotional competency. Students who need additional support will receive classroom-based interventions and may have Student Support Teams (SST) formed on their behalf. The SST may consist of teachers, parents, administrators, service providers, and support staff, all of whom will collaborate to develop an intervention plan to improve the academic performance, behavior, and/or social competency of students.

The Student Support Team coordinates services and initiatives related to academics, attendance, positive school culture, and health and wellness to ensure that all students receive appropriate support and necessary intervention. The team membership varies depending upon who the child is and what group of people need to be brought together to support the specific behavior or academic concern that has been identified as needing additional support.

A SST meeting is a team meeting that usually consists of one of the student's general education teachers, an administrator, the child's parents, and (depending on the concerns) specialists such as

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

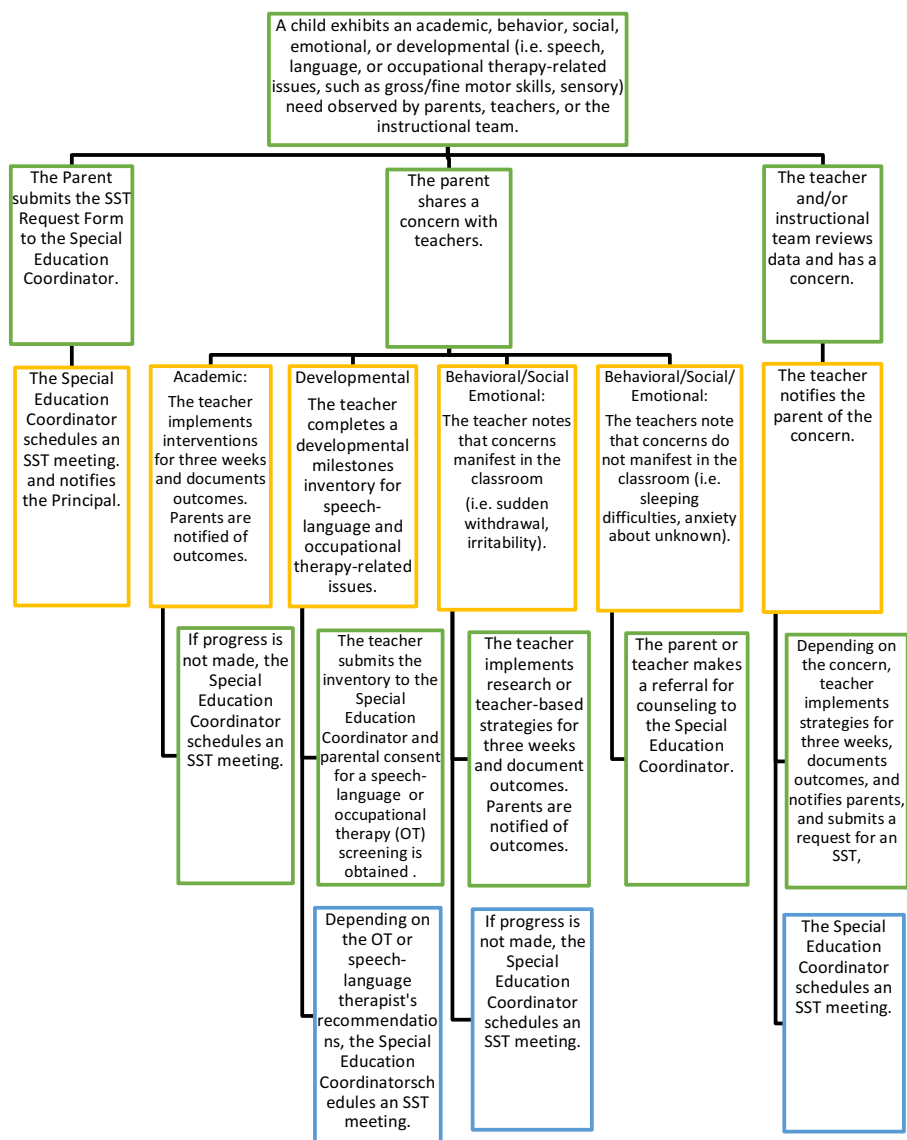
the Special Education teacher, Speech and Language Pathologist, school psychologist, or Occupational Therapist. On occasion it may be appropriate to invite the student to the meeting. SST meetings are for intervention planning for general education students that are not making satisfactory progress. All parties contribute and decisions are made at a group level. Usually a meeting consists of:

- Identification of the student's strengths.
 - Discussion the concerns about the student at school.
 - A review of the child's school and/or developmental history.
 - A review of the interventions already tried (this is where your file comes in handy).
 - If the evidence suggests that the child's delays may be due to a learning, language, or developmental disorder, a referral for Special Education assessment should result as an outcome of the meeting.
 - If the SST identifies other interventions to try, either inside or outside the classroom (e.g., interventions within the home, after school programs, community agencies, etc.). An action plan is developed and it is decided who is accountable for implementing the intervention. A follow up meeting is scheduled to evaluate the intervention results.
- Students can be referred to the Student Support Team by parents and teachers.

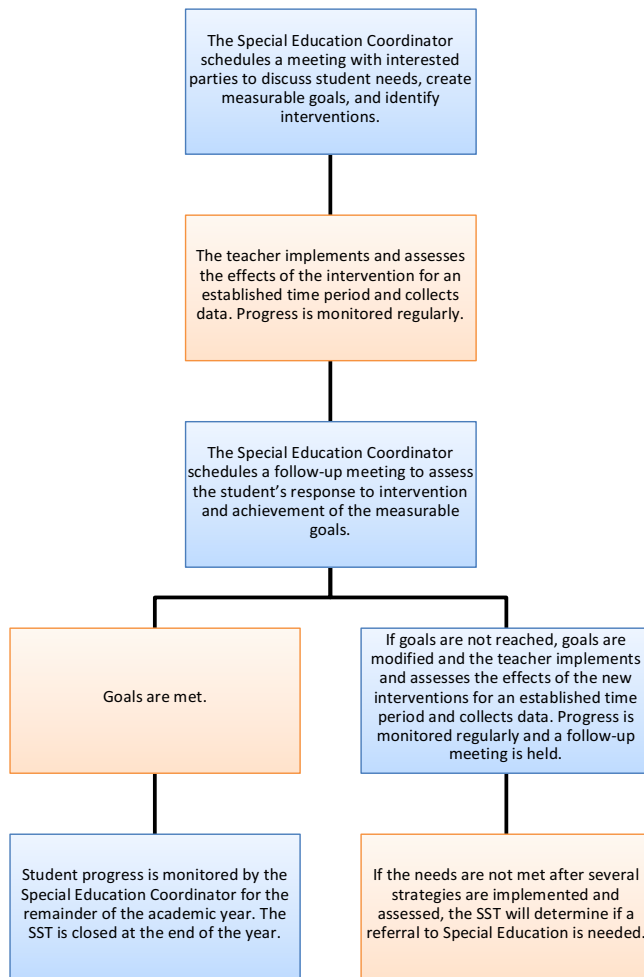
Referral:

A referral for Special Education assessment can legally be made by anyone involved with the child's education and development, including the parents, teacher, principal, pediatrician, or SST. Teachers are often in the best position to identify children with special needs, since they are usually conscious of the typical rates of development, learning, and information processing of children in the age group they are teaching.

The SST Referral Process:



The SST Process: My child has been referred to the SST, what happens now?



Special Education

Both Federal (IDEA) and local (DCMR) laws and regulations require that public schools provide a “free and appropriate public education” (FAPE) to students with disabilities. Shining Stars complies with these regulations by implementing special education services with the intent of providing an excellent and innovative education to students with disabilities through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

All records pertaining to students with special needs should be shared with the school in order to provide seamless student services if the child qualifies for special education services and the disability is

impacting his/her education. Special education services include (but are not limited to): instructional support/intervention, counseling, behavior therapy, speech/language therapy, and occupational therapy.

Shining Stars operates using an inclusion model. In our model, students with special needs participate in the classroom to the greatest extent appropriate. Teachers will collaborate with service providers to ensure that each child's needs can be met within the classroom environment when possible.

The Special Education Team

Decisions for students receiving special education services are made by a team of individuals including:

Parents

They provide information about their child, help make decisions about education plans, and partner with teachers and staff to help their children succeed.

Guides/Teachers

Teachers are responsible for implementing accommodations (including behavior plans), co-planning with special educators, participating in IEP (and other special education related) meetings, and collaborating with related service providers.

Special Education Coordinator (SEC)/Teacher

The SEC is responsible for providing teachers with relevant student information (including IEP snapshots), scheduling/facilitating IEP meetings, monitoring student progress on IEP goals, supervising related service providers, and serving as a liaison to parents.

Related Service Providers.

Their schedules and responsibilities are determined with the SEC. Their role is to provide services outlined in the IEPs, participate in IEP meetings, collaborate with teachers (about IEPs), deliver training to teachers, complete IEP report cards, and administer assessments. Providers can observe students involved in the SST process. This should be scheduled with the SEC. The service providers include:

Counselor

The counselor is a professional mental health specialist who provides services to students whose emotionality impacts their ability to participate in the classroom.

Behavior Specialist

The behavior specialist works primarily in the classroom with students and teachers by gathering behavior data, developing behavior plans, and assisting with the implementation of plans.

Speech/Language Therapist (SLP)

The SLP provides services to assist students with speech production (how they pronounce words) and language production (how they understand and generate language) in and outside of the classroom.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

The OT provides services that focus on fine and gross motor skills, including sensory integration in and outside of the classroom.

Referring Students to Special Education

Students who exhibit learning discrepancies or behavioral difficulties but do not have an IEP cannot be evaluated for special education services unless the SST process has been completed. If the SST is unsuccessful, the Special Education Coordinator will begin the screening process for special education services.

Mental Health

Students whose emotionality impact their ability to participate in the classroom and who have been referred to the SST or are receiving special education services are eligible for individual or group therapy with the school counselor. Mental health services are provided outside of the classroom.

Referring Students for Mental Health Services

Parents and teachers are expected to follow the SST guidelines, unless there is evidence of child abuse, neglect, overly sexualized behavior, maladaptive behaviors that cause the child to be a danger to themselves or others, suicide or homicide ideation, a plan to commit suicide or homicide, or an attempt to commit suicide or homicide. Children with suicidal or homicidal behaviors will immediately referred to Children's National Medical Center and a re-entry note from a medical doctor must be provided before the student is able to return to school.

BEHAVIOR and DISCIPLINE

THE MONTESSORI METHOD AND DISCIPLINE

Shining Stars Montessori Academy PCS, **we strive to foster an environment where children, guides, assistants, administrators and parents are respectful, caring and purposeful.** The Montessori program nurtures self-discipline, which develops over a period of many years. The basis of discipline is respect, for oneself, for others and for the environment. The adults and the children in the Montessori prepared environment set limits for behavior based on the group's need for a safe and mutually respectful community. Our approach to discipline at Shining Stars involve using Positive Discipline strategies, Montessori Grace and Courtesy lessons and conflict resolution strategies to help children gain self-discipline and techniques to use when they encounter challenging situations.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

As is expected in the Montessori approach to education, the adults are to be the models of appropriate behavior for the children. We must keep this in mind at all times as we interact with each other and with the children. Whatever behavior we want the children to exhibit, we need to make sure that we are also demonstrating that behavior, because children learn what they see, not what they hear. So the first step in helping children develop self-discipline and self-control is for us to model self-discipline and self-control. We also need to model and teach the children appropriate strategies and techniques for them to use in handling conflicts. The general behavioral expectations for all adults in Shining Stars Montessori PCS, whether staff, student or parent, are outlined below:

At Shining Stars Montessori PCS, we are. . .

Respectful:

- We use kind words
- We use gentle hands on our friends and the materials
- We use walking feet inside the classroom
- We keep self-to-self
- We use quiet voices
- We clean up after ourselves
- We walk around rugs on the floor

Caring

- We ask a friend if they need help
- We help keep the classroom clean
- We cooperate with our friends
- We wait our turn

Purposeful:

- We work with concentration
- We choose work that we have had a lesson on
- We complete our work
- We control our bodies

Approach to Discipline

One of the most powerful positive discipline tools is the guide/adult's ability to pair kindness with firmness, and to be a model of grace and courtesy. If a child has difficulty following the rules of the community, the response will be age-appropriate. Personal attention, distraction, substitution and/or removal from the situation are typical approaches.

Many instances resolve themselves as the child, within the bounds of safety, experiences the logical consequences of his/her actions, for example, cleaning up after throwing something on the floor. If the child disregards the limits of the classroom community, the guide/adult seeks the underlying causes in order to help the child understand the inappropriateness of his/her actions. The guide/adult also assists the child in finding a constructive alternative.

Children at Shining Stars are also expected to always put forth their best efforts in making work choices, concentrating and completing chosen work tasks. When students exhibit both appropriate social skills and good work habits they are said to have reached a level of "normalization" or "flow". This is a Montessori term not meant to mean that everyone is the same but to express a state of mind and classroom existence reflective of both social and academic independence for the child and the classroom.

When students have difficulty with their responsibilities, a series of actions may be taken depending on the significance of an inappropriate behavior. Each student incident is treated individually but the following staff responses may occur:

Progressive Responses for Less Serious/Minor

1. Student redirected by guide
2. Problem discussed with students
3. Other ways of handling a situation brainstormed (depending on child's abilities)
4. Short time-out within the classroom
5. Assigned seating near the teacher for a period of time
6. Logical consequences
7. Parent note or phone call (staff member must complete incident report)

Immediate Responses for More Serious/Major (*punching; hitting; profanity; damaging materials/equipment; physical aggression; bullying; inappropriate touching; verbal abuse*)

1. Removal from the classroom for a period of time (staff member must complete incident report)
2. Outside assistance from school administration or other personnel
3. Parent phone call/ conference
4. In-school suspension
5. Out-of-school suspension
6. Referral for Student Behavior Support Team (SBST)
7. Development of Action Plan for student, parent and Guide

When a child engages in major offense behaviors, classroom staff may respond as outlined above after attempting to follow the steps for minor offenses and the child is unable to regain self-control **OR** there is an immediate threat of danger.

Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom Environment

Positive discipline is an approach to discipline that is largely based on the work of Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs, and was developed into a cohesive program for parents and educators by Jane Nelson. With respect for the child, trust, cooperation, and personal responsibility among its core principles, positive discipline is ideally suited to the Montessori classroom and home. Positive discipline is a journey for families and educators. It can be challenging to change patterns of behavior and to find new ways to communicate. It takes time, courage, and patience to introduce new ideas.

Practical applications of positive discipline take on many different forms in the Montessori classroom. At the heart of effective positive discipline in the classroom is an empathetic Guide who genuinely cares for the children and wants to help each child develop self-discipline and self-control. Some suggestions for using positive discipline in the classroom (*and possibly at home*) include:

- Preparing the environment to make it a safe, inviting place for children;
- Ensuring that behavioral expectations are developmentally appropriate;
- Holding community meetings (for the elementary age children);
- Framing requests/statements in the positive: *"Please walk inside."* versus *"Don't run inside."*
- Asking questions: *"Why do you think things turned out that way?"* *"What do you think you could have done instead?"*
- Naming feelings: *"You must have felt so sad/happy/angry when that happened!"*
- Modeling empathy: *"I can see why that was so disappointing."* Modeling the use of "I" statements: *"I feel frustrated when..."*
- Avoiding blame, accusation, and labels;

GRACE AND COURTESY

The Grace and Courtesy lessons are the glue that holds the Montessori Primary (3-6) environment together and lays the foundation for success in the Montessori Elementary (6-12) environment. The lessons are formal and designed to preserve the harmony in the environment. In this context, "grace" can be defined as "harmony between the mind and the body"; and "courtesy" can be defined as "harmony between the self and other people". In both instances, we are talking about our social interactions with each other and how we move about in the prepared environment. It is extremely important that we are careful with our movements, adults as well as children, because of the direct social interactions that we are all involved in.

Grace deals primarily with efficiency and control of movement. The focus in a Montessori environment is on control of movement, so becoming a graceful person should be a natural outcome of all movement experiences in a Montessori prepared environment. We are also taking advantage of the 2 ½ to 4 ½ year old child's sensitive period for movement and the fact that they are especially enthralled and interested in refining their movements.

Courtesy is what we use to help establish and maintain our social relationships in the environment. This does not necessarily mean that you have to make friends with everyone, but more so it pertains to the development of the ability to communicate what you need to do so that you could live in harmony with those around you. We also need to remember that the primary child is in a sensitive period for social relations and grace and courtesy are very important issues to them.

Ideally, through Grace and Courtesy, the Guide/adult may be able to prevent some things from happening. Children can be spared feelings of awkwardness, confusion, embarrassment, and total dependence on adults in the environment with regard to what to say or do in a given situation. The lessons can go a long

way towards avoiding those feelings and also serve to counteract the negative impacts of adults who are not fully aware of how children learn.

Grace and Courtesy lessons allow the avoidance of commanding and directing and explaining to children what they need to do or correcting them when they do something. The idea is to demonstrate what needs to be done before the child is faced with situation so that the child has all the information needed to function when actually faced with the situation. This allows the child to feel oriented and comfortable and able to function within the environment. We are not expecting that the child behave in exactly the way that we demonstrate. We give the lessons knowing that the children will find their own ways.

Some suggested lessons that can be taught at home include:

- How to sit in a chair
- How to close/open a door
- How to carry a book; how to read a book
- How to greet someone
- How to say goodbye
- How to interrupt someone
- How to offer/refuse help
- How to know when the bathroom is occupied
- How to talk softly

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Children need to be taught how to handle conflicts. They also need to be given the opportunity to practice how to handle conflict situations. The adults in the environment need to be aware of this and always be ready to demonstrate appropriate conflict resolution strategies when the situation warrants it. A good rule of thumb to follow when helping children resolve conflicts is to first observe the situation before you step in. The only exception to this would be in the event that someone may be hurt if you do not intervene.

As much as possible, we want to encourage the children to solve their conflicts on their own with as much support from us as they need in order to do so safely. At neutral times, we give grace and courtesy lessons on what to say and do in certain situations so that children are able to handle conflicts independently. At other times, we may need to be involved in the resolution process, offering comfort or direction as children attempt to resolve issues and come to some resolution. One such strategy we can teach children to use is the ***“De-Bug”*** strategy. We also can utilize the ***“Gentling the Violence”*** technique, both of which are outlined below.

We can also demonstrate deep breathing and meditation techniques to help children deal with stressful situations.

Gentling the Violence (with adult assistance)

This was a technique developed by Magda Gerber which she used very successfully in her work with children as young as 18 months in European orphanages after World War 2.

When a child complains that something was done to them by another child, the adult can utilize this technique to help the children resolve the conflict.

For the younger children:

1. The adult gathers both children together in a quiet spot.
2. The adult gets down to the children's level with arms outstretched, offering each child the opportunity for a hug.
3. The adult says to the aggressor: " _____ (name of child with complaint) has something to say to you."
4. The adult assists the child in voicing their complaint to the aggressor: "You did _____ and _____ to me" and encourages the child to make eye contact with the aggressor.
5. The adult turns to the aggressor and asks them to repeat what the other child just said and gives them the opportunity to do so.
6. The adult asks the aggressor if there is anything he/she would like to say—the adult can at this point encourage/direct the aggressor to say, "I apologize for _____ (child admits to what they did here). I won't do it again."
7. The adult asks the child with the complaint if there is anything else they would like to say.
8. The adult administers the appropriate consequence to the aggressor if necessary.

For the older children:

The adult gathers both children together in a quiet spot.

1. The adult gets down to the children's level with arms outstretched, offering each child the opportunity for a hug.
2. The adult says to the aggressor: " _____ (name of child with complaint) has something to say to you."
3. The adult assists the child in voicing their complaint to the aggressor: "You did _____ and _____ to me and that really hurt/or I didn't like it."
4. The adult turns to the aggressor and asks them to repeat what the other child just said and gives them the opportunity to do so.
5. The adult asks the aggressor if there is anything he/she would like to say—the adult can at this point encourage/direct the aggressor to say, "I apologize for _____ (child admits to what they did here). I won't do it again."
6. The adult asks the child with the complaint if there is anything else they would like to say. Repeat with the aggressor.
7. The adult administers the appropriate consequence to the aggressor if necessary.

Discipline Procedures and Possible Consequences

Following the above-mentioned steps to discipline, if a child's behavior is consistent such as to warrant three (3) or more incident reports, staff may request an administrative meeting with the child, his/her/her parents, and an administrator. After this initial meeting, a Student Support Team (SST) report must be filed. School Administration will communicate any additional appropriate consequences to the parents, if necessary. Possible consequences may include:

- In-school suspension for unruly classroom conduct
- Out-of-school suspension for violent offenses
- Loss of recess privileges due to issues arising during recess time
- Financial penalty in the case of proven theft

SUSPENSION & EXPULSION

Students whose behavior is persistently disruptive, harmful to others or the materials, and does not change in response to the adult's directions will be subject to disciplinary action, including in-school suspension, school suspension, and/or expulsion.

In-school suspension (ISS) is a disciplinary response to a persistent, disruptive, and harmful behavior for students 5 years old and above. An ISS will be considered by the Student Behavior Support Team (SBST) in the event that there have been repeated attempts to otherwise re-direct a child's behavior, positive behavior interventions implemented, and support requested, which have proven ineffective in modifying the child's behavior to meet school expectations. If the SBST reaches consensus that an ISS is appropriate for the circumstance and child, parents will be immediately notified by phone, and a written ISS Notification Letter will be sent home the same day that the decision is made. If time permits, the suspension will begin immediately and the child will be removed to another area in the school to continue working. Depending on the duration of the ISS, on the following day, upon arrival at school, the child will report to his/her/her classroom teacher to receive a work assignment. The child will then report directly to the Principal with his/her/her work and be reminded of the behavior that warranted the ISS. The child will be given the opportunity to articulate alternative example behaviors and will be given reinforcement from Administration regarding school-wide behavioral expectations. Periodically, the child's teacher may visit the Office to supply additional work and check on the child's progress. The child's freedom of movement and the privilege to be in the classroom environment are restricted during an ISS. The child will be closely monitored for the duration of the ISS. The ISS will not endure for a period greater than three hours (or the equivalent of one work cycle) for a Primary Student. Upon dismissal, the child will be required to state both the non-example behavior that warranted the ISS as well as two alternative example behaviors that he/she can demonstrate upon returning to the classroom environment.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) or Expulsion are disciplinary responses to a persistent, disruptive, disrespectful and harmful behavior that has resulted in severe destruction and/or injury. (*See major offenses.*) OSS or Expulsion will be considered by the SBST only in the event that a child, age five or older, has demonstrated a repeated unwillingness to comply with school-wide behavior expectations AND school staff has completed a comprehensive Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) for the child. Shining Stars

Montessori Academy PCS maintains that it is within the school and classroom environments where we can most effectively support and create change for a child. In the event that interventions have failed and support services have been exhausted, the SBST may consider additional disciplinary measures. The SBST will determine the number of days for suspension based on the severity of the infraction and the age of the student. The OSS shall become effective immediately unless otherwise outlined by the SBST. The decision to suspend or expel a student shall be documented in writing and given to the parent/guardian on the same day that the decision is made. The student's parents/guardians have five (5) school days to challenge the decision. (Please see grievance procedure below.) If a child is placed on OSS for three (3) or more instances within the same school year, an expulsion will be seriously considered.

** Shining Stars requires that a parent/guardian attend a meeting with the Executive Director and the student's guide/teacher before a suspended student may return to school.*

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Shining Stars Montessori PCS will approach the discipline and suspension or expulsion of students with disabilities in the same manner as students without disabilities who violate the school code of conduct. The Principal will consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis and this will not prevent the Principal from disciplining, suspending or expelling students when behavior not related to the disability threatens the health, safety or welfare of students or staff or repeatedly impedes instruction for the student's classmates. Students with disabilities are entitled to certain additional procedural protections during the discipline process, including, but not limited to: requesting a meeting to determine if behaviors resulting in suspension or expulsion longer than ten (10) days are a manifestation of the student's disability. Parents may request more information and receive a copy of the procedural safeguards from the Inclusive Education Coordinator (ISC).

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Parents may appeal a disciplinary action in the following way:

1. *The parent may present the request for an appeal in writing, or verbally with an appointed secretary to document the request. This request should be submitted to the Executive Director of Shining Stars Montessori Academy PCS, Regina Rodriguez at rrodriguez@shiningstarspcs.org.*
2. *If further action is needed, parents should submit their request for an appeal to the Board Chair, Ms. Berika Broomfield, at bbroomfield@shiningstarspcs.org. Ms. Broomfield will then schedule a hearing to address the parent grievance.*

HEALTH and SAFETY

STUDENT HEALTH & WELLNESS

The health and wellness of our students is a priority for us. Parents are encouraged to ensure that your child is eating well-balanced, nutritious meals daily, getting plenty of exercise, drinking water and getting adequate rest. Your child's overall health and performance in school will benefit greatly from such practices. Parents are encouraged to give their child enough time to rest for as long as possible during the night so that they can be refreshed and ready for school the next day. A good night's rest will go a long way to ensuring that your child has an enjoyable experience at school.

ILLNESS OR INJURY AT SCHOOL

Parents are advised not to send your child to school if he/she is sick, has a fever, or exhibits any other symptoms of communicable disease. If it comes to the staff's attention that a child has become ill while at school, that child will be cared for in the office (or a quiet spot in the classroom/hallway) until a parent, guardian or other emergency contact is available to pick him/her up from school. It is expected that parents will make every effort to pick up their child as soon as possible.

A staff member will contact you if your child exhibits any of the following:

1. A temperature of 100 degrees
2. Fever accompanied by:
 - a deep cough
 - earache or draining ear
 - spasms of cough
 - sore throat

Your child will remain in the office until he/she is picked up.

All school staff members are trained in the administration of CPR/First Aid. In the event of an accident, or your child is injured at school, a staff member will attend to the child's injury until professional medical assistance arrives at the school.

If a communicable disease or illness should arise in our school, we will let families know via email and the Blue Bag, but we will maintain the privacy of the family involved.

For the protection and well-being of all children and staff at the school, the following rules must be adhered to in regard to sick children:

- **FEVER:** a child with a fever is to be excluded until fever-free for **24 hours without** medication. A fever is defined as a temperature greater than 100 degrees.
- **STREP THROAT:** a child may return to school **24 hours after** antibiotics have been started.
- **VOMITING:** a child may return to school **24 hours after the last episode**.
- **COLDS:** symptoms of a cold are described as an irritated throat, watery discharge from the nose and eyes and sneezing. A cold may or may not include a fever. Children are often most

contagious in the early, runny stages of a cold. A green discharge can signal infection. A child may return to school after **24 hours of medication**.

- **DIARRHEA:** a child may return to school **24 hours after the last episode**.
- **CONJUNCTIVITIS (Pink Eye):** if the cause is bacterial, a child may return to school after an antibiotic treatment has begun and eye ooze has stopped. If the cause is viral, a child **may return with a doctor's note that he/she is no longer contagious**.
- **EAR INFECTIONS:** a child may return to school once antibiotics are administered.
- **RASHES:** a child may return to school with a doctor's note
- **HEAD LICE:** We have a strict no-nit policy in common with DCPS. No child may be present while there are any nits present in his/her hair. Discovery of lice requires that the child be sent home and treated. All nits must be removed before the child can return to school. Upon returning to school, the child's hair will be inspected by a staff member before the child can be admitted to the classroom.
If a case of lice is discovered at home, please report it to the school. We keep details of reports and incidents confidential, but we do need to alert other parents about them.
- **RINGWORM**—a child may return to school **24 hours after** medication has been administered and the weeping/oozing has ceased.

IF YOUR CHILD IS MISSING SCHOOL BECAUSE OF AN ILLNESS, PLEASE NOTIFY THE SCHOOL OF THAT ILLNESS AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

If your child has missed school for 3 or more days due to an illness and is on medication, he/she will require a doctor's note before returning to school.

Health Requirements

Parents are required to submit medical and dental documentation for children on a yearly basis.

Allergies

Parents are expected to notify the school of any allergies your child may have. While we will make every effort to ensure that your child is not exposed to any allergens, this may not always be possible. Be sure to tell your child's teacher if there are any particular treatments your child may need in order to manage their allergies.

Medications

According to the District of Columbia Public Schools regulations, only a registered nurse is allowed to give medication to students. Shining Stars does not have a nurse on staff at this time; however, Shining Stars staff will be trained to administer medications and are available if necessary. Parents are required to administer short term medications, such as antibiotics, at home. However, if a child requires medication for asthma or food allergies at school, parents/guardians must have the necessary authorization forms completed.

It is unlawful for minors to have medications, including aspirin, in their possession or to medicate themselves. No medications, including over-the counter medications, should be in a student's possession.

Epi-Pens

In order for the staff to receive and use an Epi-pen for children with food allergies, **we must have an unexpired “Twin Pack” and a signed Parent Consent Form.**

*****Although teachers are trained in CPR and First Aid, if we do not have the required medication or documentation, the child will have to wait for 911's response to be treated.***

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE and GOVERNANCE

Shining Stars Montessori Academy PCS is a public charter school governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board has the ultimate responsibility for the success of the school and is accountable to the District of Columbia Public Charter School board to ensure that we meet the terms of our charter contract. The Board sets policy for the school. Working through the Executive Director, the Board ensures that all laws and regulations are being followed and that operations are consistent with the mission of the school.

WHAT IS A DC PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL?

- A school that is free for DC residents and open to the public.
- A school that is not part of a school district and has autonomy.
- A school that is able to utilize innovative and non-traditional methods of education.
- A school that is accountable (fiscally and educationally) to the local Public Charter School Board and the Office of the State Superintendent, the children and families of the school and the public.
- A school is governed by a board of trustees and run as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.
- A school that is required to participate in the DC CAS Assessment.
- A school that does not provide transportation.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As a charter school, we have the flexibility to use innovative methods of education while being highly accountable to our stakeholders, which includes our school's families, the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, the Office of the State Superintendent for Education, and the Department of Education. We continue to work on ways to show our stakeholders evidence of our children's great work each day. Since our environment is hands-on and individually paced, this is a challenging but important task. Our goal is to collect qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources that will enable Shining Stars to communicate school performance to stakeholders.

LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION

We are committed to best practices as set forth by the American Montessori Society (AMS). Teachers will be certified by the American Montessori Society or the Association Montessori International (AMI) for the levels for which they will be teaching whenever possible. Classroom assistants will be certified by AMS or AMI through their Classroom Assistant training program.

GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT-RESOLUTION POLICY

Shining Stars Montessori Academy Public Charter School maintains an "open door" policy. Parent complaints will be addressed in a timely and consistent fashion. Disagreements should be resolved whenever possible among the people most closely involved while preserving positive relationships. We would ask that all parties come to the discussions assuming the good intentions of the other party. When parents have complaints or disagreements with any parties at Shining Stars they should observe the following guidelines:

1. If the complaint involves a situation in the classroom, parents should seek to resolve the issue by discussing it with the classroom guide when students are *not* present.
2. If a resolution is not possible, the parent should seek to resolve the issue by making an appointment with the Principal.

3. If a resolution with the Principal is not possible, or if the complaint is with a school-wide policy or procedure, the parent should seek to resolve the issue by making an appointment to discuss it with the Executive Director.
4. If resolution is not possible with any of the parties above, parents should address their concern to the Board Secretary who will document the concern and forward matters of concern to the Board Chair, Ms. Berika Broomfield at bbroomfield@shiningstarspcs.org

Parents should also keep the following in mind when addressing a complaint to the Board of Trustees:

1. Complaints should be made in writing and should include details of your efforts to resolve the issue in steps 1 and 2, and where the discussion broke down. This allows all parties involved to work from a consistent body of information.
2. The Board of Trustees, in general, will not address a complaint based on hearsay or made on behalf of another parent or family.
3. The Board of Trustees, in general, will not address a complaint if resolution with the appropriate individuals if steps #1 and #2 has not yet been attempted in good faith.
4. The Board of Trustees reserves the right not to address a complaint that is made anonymously.
5. The Board of Trustees, in general, will not address specific complaints about the performance of individual school employees in a public meeting. If such a complaint is brought at a public meeting, the Board will take the complaint under advisement and will provide an appropriate response at a later time.
6. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to notify individual school employees about complaints brought against them. Parents may request that they are not personally identified as the party bringing the complaint.

If a parent complaint is not addressed to the satisfaction of the people involved, parents should notify the Board Chair that they are seeking resolution with the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board.

Please note: this Grievance Policy is not designed to supersede or supplant federal law and parent rights under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as amended, 1996.

ATTACHMENTS



Criteria for Book Donations: Non-Fiction or Realistic Fiction ONLY! No commercialized characters!! Also could possibly have a list available to parents to choose from of appropriate classroom books.

Pack of Colorful Kitchen Sponges (maybe just one age group- Kindergarten maybe?)

PK3 and PK4 should bring 2 complete changes of clothes labeled with their name in a Gallon sized Zip- Lock bag.

PRIMARY SUPPLY LIST 2015-2016

PRE-K3

- FAMILY PHOTO 4X6
- PHOTO OF THE CHILD (WALLET SIZE)
 - 4 ELMER'S GLUE STICKS
 - 1 SCOTCH TAPE
- 1 ELMER'S WASHABLE SCHOOL GLUE 7OZ BOTTLE
- 1 CRAYOLA 7" COLORED PRESHARPENED PENCILS 24CT
 - 1 CRAYOLA MY FIRST CRAYONS 8/16CT
- ASSORTED FOOD COLORING(4Vials .25 Fl OZ)
 - 1 CRAYOLA WASHABLE WATERCOLORS 8 CT
 - 1 KLEENEX TISSUE 85CT FLAT
 - 2 BABYWIPES SOFT PACK 80CT
 - 1 CLOROX/LYSOL WIPES (GREEN) 35 CT
 - 1 FISKARS 5" BLUNT SCISSORS
 - 2 TWO POCKET SOLID COLOR FOLDER
 - 1 50 CT BOX OF ZIPLOCK Gallon size
 - 1 100CT SET OF 5OZ DIXIE CUPS
 - 1 FLUSHABLE WIPES 42CT
- ONE CHILDREN'S BOOK – FICTION OR NON FICTION
- 1 CHANGE OF CLOTHES IN A GALLON SIZE ZIP-LOCK BAG LABELED WITH STUDENT'S NAME

PRE-K4

- FAMILY PHOTO 4X6
- PHOTO OF THE CHILD (wallet size)
 - 4 ELMER'S GLUE STICKS
- 1 ELMER'S WASHABLE SCHOOL GLUE 7OZ BOTTLE
 - 1 XEROGRAPHIC PAPER REAM
- 1 PRISMACOLOR PRE-SHARPENED PENCILS 12CT
 - 2 CRAYOLA WASHABLE WATERCOLORS 8 CT
 - 1 KLEENEX TISSUE 85CT FLAT
 - 2 BABYWIPES SOFT PACK 80CT
- 1 BEGINNERS LARGE TRIANGLE PENCILS WITH ERASER 6CT
 - 1 ANTIBACTERIAL WETONES W/REDTOP 40 CT
- 1 MEAD MARBLE COMP STORY PAPER RD BSLINE 100CT
 - 1 CURAD BANDAIDS (LATEX FREE) 60CT
 - 1 CRAYOLA CRAYONS 24CT
- 1 50CT BOX OF ZIPLOCK/GLADLOCK BRAND QUART BAGS
 - 2 TWO POCKET SOLID COLOR FOLDER
- 1 HEAVYWEIGHT CONSTRUCTION PAPER 50CT (MULTI-COLORED)
- 1 CHANGE OF CLOTHES IN A GALLON SIZE ZIP-LOCK BAG LABELED WITH STUDENT'S
NAME

Kindergarten

- FAMILY PHOTO 4X6
- PHOTO OF THE CHILD (WALLET SIZE)
- TRICONDEROGA PENCILS 12/18CT
 - 1 PENCIL SHARPENERS
- PAPERMATE ARROW HEAD ERASER CAP 1 SMALL BOX
 - 2 PINK PEARL MEDIUM ERASER
- 2 TWO POCKET SOLID COLOR FOLDER
 - 1 RULER 12" LABELED
- 1 cRAYOLA MARKERS WASHABLE 10CT
- 2 MEAD PRIMARY RULED MARBLE COMP BK 100CT
- 1 PRISMACOLOR PRESHARPENED PENCILS 12CT
- 1 CRAYOLA WASHABLE WATERCOLORS 8 CT
 - 1 XEROGRAPHIC PAPER REAM
 - 2 ELMER'S GLUE STICK
 - 1 KLEENEX TISSUE 85CT FLAT
 - 1 FISKARS 5" BLUNT SCISSORS
- 1 50CT BOX OF ZIPLOCK/GLADLOCK BRAND SANDWICH BAG
 - 1 ANTIBACTERIAL WETONES W/REDTOP 40 CT
- 1 CHANGE OF CLOTHES IN A GALLON SIZE ZIP-LOCK BAG LABELED WITH STUDENT'S NAME

SUPPLY LIST 2016-2017

Deleted: 5

Deleted: 6

1st Grade- 3RD Grade

1st grade

- FAMILY PHOTO 4X6
- PHOTO OF THE CHILD 4X6
- 24 NO2 DIXON TICONDEROGA PENCIL LATEX FREE
- 4 MEAD PRIMARY RULED MARBLE COMP BK 100CT
 - 3 MAGIC RUB ERASER (PEN/PENCIL)
- 1 CRAYOLA 7" COLORED PRESHARPENED PENCILS 24CT
 - 1 CRAYOLA 4" X 7/16" LARGE CRAYONS 8CT
 - 1 CRAYOLA WASHABLE WATERCOLORS 8 CT
 - 1 XEROGRAPHIC PAPER REAM
 - 2 ELMER'S GLUE STICKS
 - 1 KLEENEX TISSUE 85CT FLAT
 - 1 FISKARS 5" BLUNT SCISSORS
 - 1 MR CLEAN MAGIC ERASER 2 PACK
 - 1 ANTIBACTERIAL WET ONES W/REDTOP 40 CT
 - 1 ELMER'S 4OZ SCHOOL GLUE
- 1 25CT BOX OF ZIPLOCK/GLADLOCK BRAND QUART BAGS

2nd grade & 3rd Grade

- FAMILY PHOTO 4X6
- PHOTO OF THE CHILD 4X6
- 1 CRAYOLA 7" COLORED PRESHARPENED PENCILS 24CT
 - 5 100 CT BLACK MARBLE COMP BOOK WR
 - 1 XEROGRAPHIC PAPER REAM
- 2 SHARPIE ACCENT PEN STYLE HIGHLIGHTER FL. YELLOW
 - 1 USB 2.0 FLASH DRIVE 2GB
 - 48 NO2 DIXON TICONDEROGA PENCIL
 - 4 ELMER'S GLUE STICKS
- 6 BLACK EXPO2 LOW ODOR FINE POINT MARKER
 - 1 KLEENEX TISSUE 85CT FLAT
- 2 MAGIC RUB ERASER (PEN/PENCIL) LATEX FREE
- 2 GREEN PLASTIC POCKET & BRAD FOLDERS
- 2 BLUE PLASTIC POCKET & BRAD FOLDERS
- 1 RED PLASTIC POCKET & BRAD FOLDERS
- 1 YELLOW PLASTIC POCKET & BRAD FOLDERS
 - 2 GREEN MED STICK PEN
- 2 ANTIBACTERIAL WETONES W/REDTOP 40 CT

4th & 5th Grade Supplies List

Family Photo 4 x6
Photo of the child 4 x 6
1 pack Graph paper with holes
1 pack 100 sheets loose leaf paper
2-3" 3 hole binder can be Trapper Keeper
1 ream of plain white paper
1 pack mixed color Construction Paper
Colored pencils, erasable preferably
1 pack 30-48 Ticonderoga Pencils
6 College Ruled Notebooks (no designs, spirals are okay, composition style are also fine)
1 Graph Paper notebook
1 Plastic Legal size expanding Envelope with re-sealable closure
1 Plastic letter size expanding Envelope with re-sealable closure
1 Bottle Elmer's Glue 7.6 oz
Pencil sharpener
1 USB 2.0 Flash Drive 4GB
1 Box of tissues
Pencil case or fanny pack
5" student scissors
4 Pack Elmer's Glue sticks
9x12 Drawing/ Artist's paper
6 pack Sargent Primary Tempera Paint set (4oz)
1 box of Band-Aids
Pack of erasers
Plastic Forks
Plastic Spoons
1 Clorox/ Lysol Disinfecting Wipes 35 Count
1 Green Cotton Washcloth
1 Blue Cotton Washcloth
Optional: Refillable Bottle for Water (to reduce use of disposables)

* Mechanical pencils are allowed, but if it becomes a distraction for the student, she or he will lose that privilege and be asked to leave them at home. *

SUGGESTIONS FOR DELICIOUS AND HEALTHY LUNCHES

- All varieties of fresh fruits (berries, grapes, apple or orange wedges, watermelon cubes,...) and fresh vegetables (carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, snap peas, celery broccoli florets,...), with yogurt-, cottage cheese-, or seed-butter-based dips, black bean dip or hummus
- Whole wheat mini bagels with cream cheese or seed butters
- Whole wheat tortillas stuffed with fun fillings and sliced into pinwheels (filling ideas: refried beans and cheese, seed butter and banana, cream cheese and berries,...)
- Quiche or frittatas prepared in muffin tins
- Quesadillas with black beans, rice, cheese and salsa for dipping
- Beans and legumes (chick peas, black or kidney beans, dried peas, edamame) left whole or blended into spreads for sandwiches or dipping
- Cooked whole wheat pasta (spirals, letters, tortellini, or other interesting shapes)
- Brown rice cakes with sliced banana and seed butter
- Cubed cheese
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Shredded carrot and raisin salad or make your own
- Dried fruit (raisins, apricots, apple rings, bananas, cranberries, cherries...)
- Seeds
- Whole grain pretzels or crackers, or baked chips
- Natural or organic granola bars or fig bars
- Trail mix (with seeds, and dried fruit or coconut instead of candy)
- Fruit leather (made with real fruit puree, not fruit roll-ups)
- Plain popcorn (without artificial flavorings)
- Unsweetened applesauce and other fruit purees
- Healthy baked goods (blueberry muffins, banana bread, corn bread,...)

Together with your child, prepare a list of favorite lunch items you can refer to when it's time for lunch preparation. Encourage your child to assist with lunch preparation, doing things such as peeling, chopping, spreading, etc. Your child can help prepare lunch the night before so it is ready in the morning.

*** CODE OF CONDUCT & PARENT CONTRACT ***
Parent/Guardian Responsibilities – 2016-2017

1. Adhere to policies outlined in the Parent Handbook.
2. Be an active participant in your child's education – to include participation in at least two (2) parent seminars each school year and attendance at school-wide events.
3. Be knowledgeable of the Montessori model and committed to a Montessori education for your child.
4. Support and respect your child's social, emotional, spiritual and academic development.

PARENT/GUARDIAN AGREEMENT SY16-17

By signing this agreement:

1. I acknowledge receipt of the parent handbook.
2. I agree to read thoroughly and abide by the policies and procedures outlined in this parent handbook.
3. I agree to attend at least two (2) parent conferences per school year and observe in the classroom at least one (1) time.
4. I agree to participate in school wide events and attend parent workshops and help build the Shining Stars community in a positive way.
5. I agree to further my understanding of the Montessori approach to education so as to aid my child's social, emotional, spiritual and academic development.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

School Representative (SSMA)

Date

GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED MONTESSORI TERMS

Absorbent Mind - Maria Montessori uses this term to describe the minds of young children. Their minds are like sponges soaking up information from their environment. Just think about how much a child learns in the early years: how to talk, walk, understand social cues and relationships, objects, laws of nature (like gravity), and even the rudiments of reading. Much of this learning is unconscious because the brains of young children have been hard-wired to absorb information automatically and effortlessly.

Assessments- In education, the term assessment refers to a wide variety of methods that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students. Assessments can range from formal traditional testing to an informal series of observations and strategic questions to better understand the child's mastery of a particular skill or subject area.

Circle Time- Circle time is a specific time during the day where students and teachers come together as a community of learners. During this time, we share our thoughts, actively listen to one another, actively participate together, introduce new concepts and ideas, read together, sing together, and build a sense of respect and support for each. Circle time aids in the development of social awareness, self-esteem and fosters a sense of community.

Children's House – In many Montessori schools, this is the classroom for children ages 2.5 (or 3) to 6 years. Other schools may refer to this classroom as Casa, preschool, or primary school.

Common Core State Standards - State Standards that outline a clear and distinct set of shared goals and expectations for content knowledge and skills in English language arts and mathematics. Each student needs to meet said standards in order to be considered proficient at each grade level.

Control of Error - Children make mistakes as they learn. Maria Montessori recognized that it was vitally important that children not lose motivation or become discouraged when mistakes occur. So in each didactic material she built in a way for the child to recognize if his/her work was done correctly or not, along with the ability to make it right. This in turn is called a control of error. As a result, no one criticizes his/her error or circles his/her mistakes with a big red pencil for the entire world to see. If a child is putting the lids on bottles and one top does not fit, he knows he's using the wrong sized lid without having to be told.

Cosmic Curriculum – The Cosmic education is Montessori's umbrella term for elementary education. The concept is strongly related to "Whole to Part." Stories about the universe, as well as "Great Lessons," form the basis of the curriculum. Once the students have heard the grand design, have received the big picture, they feel satisfied by an apprehension of the whole and "their minds become fixed and they can concentrate."

Didactic Materials – In Montessori didactic materials are designed to be artistically pleasing and to teach through the senses. The child progresses through the curriculum by repeatedly handling and manipulating these materials. Each one is scientifically designed to teach one concept only. There is also a specific

order in which the materials are presented to the child: for example, in the geography area the sandpaper globe showing the difference between land and water is presented first. The globe of the world showing the continents are shown second. Then a round blue ball of clay is cut in half and pressed flat to explain how we arrive at a map. These unique didactic materials have a control of error built right in. (you won't find them anywhere except a Montessori classroom)

Grace and Courtesy – Mini lessons where Children are formally taught social skills they will use throughout the rest of their lives. Some grace and courtesy lessons can include, saying “please” and “thank you,”, requesting rather than demanding assistance or materials another child has, respecting others space and learning how to politely interrupt conversations or get someone’s attention.

Guide – The lead teacher in a Montessori classroom, the role of the Guide is to direct or guide individual children to purposeful activity based upon the Guide’s observation of each child’s readiness. The child develops their own knowledge through hands-on learning with the use of educational materials. The Guide’s goal is to facilitate, not force her/his/her own ideas of what students should learn, and when.

Lower Elementary- The lower elementary classroom (1st through 3rd grade, or ages 6-9), the initial expectations are that the child will be able to accept direction, listen attentively in small and large group presentations and will be able to work in a cooperative learning atmosphere.

Maria Montessori - Maria Tecla Artemisia Montessori (August 31, 1870 – May 6, 1952) was an Italian physician and educator best known for the philosophy of education that bears her name, and also for her writing on scientific pedagogy. She opened the first Montessori school the Casa de Bambini also known as Children’s House in Rome on January 6, 1907. Her educational methods are commonly used today in many public and private schools throughout the world.

Normalization – Normalization is the Montessori term for a healthy, well-adjusted child who learns effectively in any situation. This is a natural or “normal” developmental process marked by a love of work or activity, concentration, self-discipline, and joy in accomplishment. Dr. Montessori observed that the normalization process is characteristic of human beings at any age.

Planes of development – The Planes of Development are four distinct periods of growth, development, and learning that build on each other as children and youth progress through them. Ages 0 – 6 years (the period of the “absorbent mind”), ages 6 – 12 years (the period of reasoning and abstraction), ages 12 – 18 years (when youth construct the “social self,” developing moral values and becoming emotionally independent) and lastly ages 18 – 24 years (when young adults construct an understanding of the self and seek to know their place in the world).

Practical Life- A unique area in the Montessori classroom that contains activities through which the child learns to care for themselves as well as the environment. Some of the purposeful activities in the Practical Life area include but is not limited to hand washing, table setting, dish, table and clothes washing, polishing, spooning, pouring etc. The materials used are familiar ones taken from the child’s daily life and is used to develop self-confidence and independence.

Prepared Environment—Unlike traditional education, where there is primarily a two part structure (Teacher/Student), Montessori classrooms have three equal parts (Teacher/Student/Environment). A Montessori teacher has the responsibility of preparing the classroom environment with appealing hands-on materials so that the environment also becomes the child's "teacher." The teacher prepares the environment of the Montessori classroom with carefully selected, attractively arranged materials that are presented sequentially to meet the developmental needs of the child. Well-prepared Montessori environments contain appropriately sized furniture, a full assortment of Montessori materials, and enough space to allow children to work in peace, alone or in small or large groups.

Primary –The Primary classroom (Preschool and Kindergarten or ages 3-6) provides nurturing opportunities for children's individual development within the context of a group setting. They will emerge from this stage with polished social, emotional and academic skills, while more importantly learning how to function within a group.

Sensitive period – A critical time during human development when a child is biologically ready and receptive to learning a specific skill or ability, such as the use of language or a sense of order. It is therefore particularly important to stimulate and promote the development of skills during this time. A Montessori teacher prepares the environment to meet the developmental needs of each sensitive period. During these periods the child will get involved in a repetitive activity until it develops into a new skill. Montessori Directors are trained to be receptive to these sensitive periods of time, and to give the child every opportunity to take in what they are ready for at that moment

Sensorial- An area of the Montessori classroom unique to and specifically for the development of the five senses. This area provides a foundation for speech, writing, and arithmetic through use of sensorial materials. This area is scientifically designed with didactic materials to help the child learn through the senses. This fine tuning of the senses carries over to other areas of learning. For example the Aural skills are sharpened by using the Sound Cylinders (This teaches the child how to match sounds) that later help in differentiating the sounds used in learning how to read. Another sensorial material is the Pink Tower (made of up of blocks that gradually reduce in size) helps children understand spatial relationships, which lays a foundation for learning math later on.

Teaching Assistant - Teaching assistants work in conjunction with the Guide to prepare and maintain an orderly, attractive classroom environment. As a team the Guide and Assistant strategically prepare and create lessons and activities that will engage the child, helping them reach their fullest potential. Assistants provide an extra pair of observant and attentive eyes and ears in the classroom. Their presence is crucial to modeling courteous and respectful behavior within the classroom. As well as contributing to the warm, supportive, and calm atmosphere that is the hallmark of Montessori classrooms. [Note: Teaching Assistant and Classroom Assistant are used interchangeably at Montessori school/programs].

The 3-Period Lesson- A 3-step technique used to present new information to a child. In the first step is the introduction or naming period the teacher demonstrates what "This is." In the second step is the association or recognition period where the teacher asks the child to "show" what was just identified. Finally, in the third step the teacher asks the child to name the object or area. Moving from new

information to passive recall to active identification reinforces the child's learning and demonstrates their mastery.

Uninterrupted Work Cycle - A basic work cycle begins with choosing an activity, properly doing the activity, returning the activity in its right order, and then finally experiencing a sense of satisfaction. This sense of satisfaction motivates the child to choose the next activity, thus creating another cycle of work. In a Montessori children have three hours (a period in the morning and in the afternoon) of open, uninterrupted time to choose independent work, become deeply engaged, and repeat to their own satisfaction.

Upper Elementary- In the Upper Elementary classroom (4th through 6th grade, or ages 9- 12), content is not presented in "course subject" form; instead, ideas and concepts are explored across the board and to the depth demanded by the child. For example, flowers are not just observed in books or through the window. The flower (possibly cultivated by the child) is brought into the environment, touched, named, identified by parts, compared and contrasted with other plants (presently and historically), reviewed within its life cycle, located in the world, etc. Thus the education is more about experiencing, senses are engaged whenever possible, aiding in the child's natural capacity to learn.